

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Colonial History

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Edited by Paul H. Kratoska

Volume V

Peaceful Transition to Independence (1945-1963)



London and New York

5012701

First published 2001
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

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Typeset in Times by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
South East Asia, colonial history / edited by Paul H. Kratoska.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-415-21539-0

1. Asia, Southeastern—History. 2. Imperialism—Asia, Southeastern—
History. I. Kratoska, Paul H.

DS526.4 .S65 2001

959—dc21

00-068359

ISBN 0-415-21539-0 (set)

ISBN 0-415-24784-5 (volume 5)

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References within each chapter are as they appeared in the
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PEACEFUL TRANSITIONS
TO INDEPENDENCE
(1945-1963)

INTRODUCTION

For American and British territories in South East Asia, the end of colonial rule arrived peacefully. The Philippines became a fully independent Republic in 1946. Burma gained independence at the start of 1948 and Malaya in 1957, while colonial status ended for the territories of northern Borneo in 1963. In each case, the change was handled through negotiations.

After the constitution for the new Philippine Commonwealth received approval in May 1935, Manuel Quezon won a presidential election held in September, and the Commonwealth was inaugurated on 15 November. Under the constitution, the President held most of the powers formerly exercised by the Governor General. A ten-year period of transition gave the government time to arrange an orderly adjustment to the loss of special privileges associated with colonial status. The Japanese Occupation disrupted this process, but the transfer of power nevertheless took place as scheduled on 4 July 1946.

Burma had become a self-governing territory within the British Empire in 1937, but the country was the scene of heavy fighting during the war, and emerged with its infrastructure badly damaged and its economy in ruins. The war years also left a legacy of communal tensions, and in British eyes the political elite was deeply compromised by collaboration with Japan. British plans for the country called for rolling back some of the reforms of the 1930s and setting in motion a fresh transition to some sort of dominion status. Burmese leaders rejected this scheme and demanded immediate independence outside the British Commonwealth, a prospect that generated much concern among minorities who had found British rule relatively benign and feared what might happen under a government dominated by ethnic Burmans. The Burmese leader Aung San tried to allay their fears, and the British government put in place some modest safeguards while making it clear that minority proposals calling for the break-up of the territory would not receive support. Burma became independent on 4 January 1948, but the assassination of Aung San six months earlier, on 19 July 1947, had left the country bereft of its most important political leader. Communal relations deteriorated, and the government also faced challenges from a communist

movement, and from rival factions within the ruling group. Within two years, Burma was in the middle of a civil war.

For British Malaya the process leading to independence was far more protracted. Unlike the Burmans, the Malays were not a dominant majority within the country, and the large Chinese population was seeking political rights that seemed to threaten the Malay position. Immediately after the Occupation, the British government introduced a Malayan Union scheme designed to lead towards independence. The Malays seized the occasion to establish a stronger political presence, and forced Britain to replace the Malayan Union with a Federation of Malaya that was more favourable to Malay interests. In 1948 the outbreak of a communist rebellion, known to history as the Emergency, further delayed moves towards independence, although a process of Malayanization of government services and substantial political reform continued throughout this period. When independence came in 1957, constitutional safeguards protected the Malays, and the different races living in the country had worked out a *modus vivendi* that shaped post-independence politics.

For the time being, the British kept Singapore outside of Malaya to accommodate communal pressures in the peninsula, and isolate British military and political activities from local politics. The general assumption was that Singapore would one day be reunited with the rest of the former British Malaya, but that day did not come until the creation of a new Federation of Malaysia in 1963, and by then the course followed by Malaya and Singapore had diverged to an extent that made unification extremely difficult. Singapore joined the Federation, but remained in it for just two years.

In Borneo, Sarawak and the former British North Borneo had been British protectorates since 1888, but both now became British colonies, Sarawak on 1 July 1946, and North Borneo two weeks later. In 1963 the two territories joined the Federation of Malaysia, solving a political problem for Britain by eliminating an awkward relic of the colonial past, and solving a political problem for the peninsular Malays by enlarging the non-Chinese population of the country. Plans for the Federation envisaged the inclusion of Brunei, but the Sultanate's oil revenues made it sufficiently wealthy that integration posed nearly insuperable questions about the control and disposition of the country's cash and resources, and about the status of the ruling elite. In the end, Brunei remained outside of Malaysia.

Siam, now renamed Thailand, had broken away from its quasi colonial status during the 1930s, but faced difficulties after 1945 owing to its cooperation with Japan during the war. Great Britain in particular wanted the country to face some sort of punishment, and earn its way back into international favour. However, the United States opposed this sort of retribution, and promoted Thailand as a bulwark against communist expansion.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

The articles collected in this volume are mostly the work of academic writers, although Sir Donald MacGillivray was British High Commissioner in Malaya during the early 1950s, and Gerald Hawkins was a member of the Malayan Civil Service, as was Victor Purcell before he joined Cambridge University as a Lecturer in Far Eastern History. The design followed here has been to provide a general overview of the circumstances in each of the countries concerned, along with materials that elucidate key features of the period.

BURMA

BURMA

B. R. Pearn

Source: F. C. Jones, Hugh Borton and B. R. Pearn, *Survey of International Affairs 1939-46*, vol. 7, *The Far East 1942-46*, London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1955), pp. 276-92.

At the moment of the Japanese capitulation of 15 August 1945 the situation in Burma differed from that in Siam, Malaya, Indonesia, and Indo-China in the material point that the greater part of the country had already been occupied by Allied forces. As a result of the strenuous Burma campaigns of 1944-5, which had been the biggest land operation conducted against the Japanese in any theatre, the forces of South-East Asia Command had freed the whole of Burma except for the area east of the Sittang river, though parties of Japanese were still trying to make their way eastward from the Irrawaddy valley to join their main forces. As each district had been occupied it had passed under the control of the Civil Affairs Service, Burma, for the purposes of administration. This Service consisted of a nucleus of civil officers of the Government of Burma, mostly European, with a considerable corps of temporary officers recruited partly from Europeans and others with previous experience of the country. Most of them held military rank.

The country was in a deplorable condition. It had suffered more than any other part of South-East Asia, for, in addition to having been fought over from south to north in 1942, it had again been fought over from north to south in 1944-5. In the capital, Rangoon, economic life was at a standstill; no trams or buses were running; the water and sewage systems were out of action; bomb-craters in roads had remained unfilled; whole blocks of the city had been laid waste by Allied bombing; the electrical installations were out of action; and, in general, the city was a scene of desolation. Many provincial towns had suffered even worse, because the less substantial construction of their buildings had made them still less proof against destruction by fire. The population of the principal centres had been driven from its homes by bombing and land warfare, and there was hardly a town in Burma that was functioning as a normal centre of life. Railway communications had been

disrupted by the destruction of bridges and railway lines and by heavy loss in rolling-stock. The main roads were likewise virtually out of action owing to destruction of bridges and owing also to lack of maintenance during the Japanese occupation. The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's fleet, once the largest inland-water transport system in the world, and a service that was of vital importance in a country where water communications were more widely used than land communications, had been destroyed almost to the last vessel. The production of petroleum and of metals was at a standstill owing to the 'policy of denial' adopted in 1942, when the installations had been destroyed to prevent their being of use to the enemy. Stocks of timber, one of Burma's chief products, had been dissipated, and forests had suffered from lack of conservation. The export of rice had ceased entirely, since the country had been cut off from its principal market in India, and the Japanese, who in any case could obtain rice more easily from Siam and Indo-China, lacked the shipping wherewith to move it; and, in consequence, vast areas of agricultural land had gone out of cultivation and were rapidly reverting to jungle because the cultivators had been reduced to bare subsistence cultivation. Consumer goods, such as textiles and medicines, had not been imported for three years and were almost unobtainable except by the very wealthy. As a result of the disruption of communications, the people in some areas were on the verge of starvation; for, though Burma as a whole was more than self-sufficing in essential foods, it was necessary all the same to transport foodstuffs locally in order to supply the town populations, and the internal trade by which the rice of Lower Burma was exchanged for the vegetables and the cooking oil of Central Burma was also essential for the life of the mass of the people.

The task of restoring order out of this chaos fell in the first place on the Civil Affairs Service, which had not only to improvise a system of administration but also to organize transport, health services, and every other activity of normal life, and had to do this through the instrumentality of a subordinate staff that was largely inexperienced, because the Indians who had played so great a part in the lower ranks of the public services in Burma before the war had in many cases been evacuated to India in 1942 and had not returned, while the subordinates who had stayed in Burma, whether Indians or Burmese, had suffered many casualties through sickness or, in other cases, had taken to some more lucrative means of livelihood if such could be found. With the aid of the military organization, however, great efforts were made to set the machinery of life going again.

So long as the Civil Affairs Service remained in charge, working under the ultimate control of South-East Asia Command, a purely bureaucratic system of government was in operation. The country was, in fact, under military rule; but this was no prophylactic against political agitation. The members of the Burma Independence Army, which had helped the Japanese in 1942 but afterwards, foreseeing the inevitability of Japan's eventual defeat, had changed sides in March 1945 and had given its support to the Allied cause,

had already gained much influence. This had been the first purely Burmese army, commanded by Burmans, that Burma had seen since the deposition of King Thibaw by the British in 1885; and, though in truth this force had contributed little to the Allied victory, it had increased its influence by ending up on the winning side. The patronage extended to it by South-East Asia Command and the fact that, although some of its leaders had been denounced in wireless broadcasts from Rangoon in 1942 for crimes which they had committed, no proceedings had been taken against them when the Allied forces had arrived in the country gave their countrymen the impression that they were more powerful than in fact they were; and, by an assiduous propaganda, they were endeavouring to convince the credulous that the Patriotic Burmese Forces, as they now called themselves, had really won the war with some very slight support from the Allied troops. Furthermore, the pre-war political parties had almost ceased to exist during the Japanese occupation, and the head of the Japanese-sponsored government, Dr. Ba Maw, had fled the country. Thus the leaders of the Patriotic Burmese Forces found themselves without rivals.

Under these conditions their commander, U Aung San, publicly assumed the leadership of the Anti-Fascist Organization, later known as the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, which had been founded secretly in 1944 as an anti-Japanese movement. In theory this was an association of some ten political groups, among which the Communist Party was the most numerous. The objective of this League was to obtain Burma's independence.

The policy of the British Government had been defined in a White Paper¹ issued in May 1945. In this it had been declared that the aim of the British Government was to enable Burma to achieve complete self-government within the British Commonwealth. At the same time the White Paper pointed out that the effects of the war and of the Japanese occupation were bound to cause a setback in the country's constitutional progress. For example, the dispersal of the population from its normal homes and the general upheaval of life would necessitate a complete revision of the electoral rolls and perhaps the definition of a new franchise; and the restoration of communications would also be a prerequisite for the holding of elections. Until material conditions that were essential for the proper working of the democratic system of government could be restored, the parliamentary method could not be employed and accordingly, though military administration was to cease so soon as operational necessities should allow, all authority was then still to be retained in the hands of the Governor. The Governor would, however, be assisted by an Executive Council, including a Burmese element, and, if conditions permitted, also by a small Legislative Council. Tentatively, a period of three years was suggested for the duration of this non-representative system of government, and during that time representatives of the Burmese people were to formulate a new Constitution for their country. In the inter-war period the non-Burman indigenous population in

the Frontier Areas had never participated in the Burman parliamentary system, but had been administered by a system of indirect rule under the British Governor's control, and in the White Paper it was proposed that this administrative distinction should be maintained and that the Governor should remain responsible for the government of these areas until such time as the inhabitants themselves should express a desire for the amalgamation of their territories with Burma Proper.

These proposals were not such as to satisfy the vehemently nationalist leaders of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. In 1943 the Japanese and their satellite states had recognized Burma as an independent sovereign state, and, though this independence had been only nominal, the fact that their country had received formal recognition as a sovereign state had made a deep impression on Burmans who were politically minded. Much as they had resented Japanese oppression, they had no desire to lose their new status. Again, the collapse of British power in 1942 had shaken their confidence in the British Commonwealth. Siam, which had been an independent state, had suffered far less in the war than had Burma, which had been a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations; and this had discredited the thesis—which had been the stock argument in favour of the British connexion—that membership of the Commonwealth was an effective insurance against aggression by a third party. The Burmans also could not forget that, during the Japanese occupation, the administration of Burma had been completely Burman, and that the life of the country had been kept going after a fashion without that stiffening of European officials which had for so long been declared by Europeans to be necessary. The Burman nationalists could see no reason now why they should not continue to administer their own country, and they were entirely confident of their ability to do this. The suggestion that Burma must again undergo a period of tutelage before attaining independence was thus repugnant to them. Furthermore, it had been affirmed at the time of the passing of the Government of Burma Act, 1935, that Burma's constitutional progress would not lag behind India's, and, when it became apparent after the war that political developments in India were likely to be rapid, the demand for corresponding political progress in Burma was consequently stimulated.

There was thus a clear and deep cleavage between the policy of the British Government, as laid down in the White Paper, and the aims of the Burman nationalists. The British were proposing a period of unrepresentative government, followed by self-government within the Commonwealth; the Burmans were demanding nothing less than complete independence and separation from the Commonwealth. In the early months of the Allied occupation, when there was an alien army of nearly a million men in Burma, the Burman nationalists had no means of resisting the White Paper policy, but it was evident that the Allied forces would soon begin to be repatriated, and it was unlikely that there would be any enthusiasm for participation in a civil

war on the part of such non-Burman troops as might be detained in the country. The Burman nationalists therefore bided their time, building up their influence until the removal of military administration should open the way for them to go into vigorous opposition.

Apart from the general question of Burma's constitutional future, there was a particular question that was agitating the minds of the League's leaders. This was the problem of the future of the Patriotic Burmese Forces. The leaders wanted to make these Forces into the nucleus of a regular Burmese army, which—so U Aung San declared at this time—was to form the foundation for a Dominion army.² A conference was held at South-East Asia Command headquarters in Kandy on 7 September 1945, attended by Admiral Mountbatten, General Slim, U Aung San, U Than Tun, the leader of the Burmese Communist Party, and other representatives of both the Command and the League; and an agreement was reached as to the terms on which members of the Patriotic Burmese Forces should be formed into regular units, to be trained by British officers. It was not found possible, however, to incorporate all the Forces in this way; some were unfit on physical or educational grounds, and the future of those who thus remained outside the new Burma army became a matter of uncertainty and a potential menace to the country's security.

The termination of hostilities made the restoration of civil government necessary at an early date; so long as operations had been in progress, military government had been unavoidable, but it was hard to justify its continuance when once the Japanese had surrendered. In consequence the Governor of Burma, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, returned to Burma and resumed his functions on 16 October 1945, though, for the time being, Burma east of the Sittang river remained under military administration, since large numbers of Japanese in that area had still to be brought under control. The transfer of departments of government to civil control was carried out gradually by stages, and the Civil Affairs Service was finally wound up on 31 March 1946.

Upon the return of the Governor, Burma was once more being governed in accordance with the terms of the Government of Burma Act, 1935; but, since the restoration of the parliamentary system was not considered to be possible at that stage, the administration was carried on under Section 139 of the Act, which provided that, if circumstances required, the Governor might by proclamation take all or any of the powers of government into his own hands.

In a speech delivered at the City Hall in Rangoon on 17 October 1945 the Governor stated that he had returned with no definite formula but with a definite and practical programme, 'after the fulfilment of which, Burma will—no longer "may"—take her place among the fully self-governing nations of the world . . . Burma's right to freedom has been conceded, and all that remains to be done is to ensure that she attains that freedom literally as quickly as possible, in an orderly and constitutional manner.' There might,

he went on to say, be differences of opinion on this programme, but 'the essential thing to do is to arrive at the greatest possible measure of common agreement in the shortest possible time'. General elections, he announced, would be held as soon as possible, but it would be necessary, as preliminary steps, to establish conditions under which all voters would be able to vote without fear of the consequences, to determine the franchise, and to prepare the electoral rolls. The Executive Council, which he intended shortly to appoint, should be regarded as a temporary, 'caretaker' expedient.

My aim will be [he said] during the next few weeks, to form a Council which will be predominantly composed of non-official Burmans who command the respect and confidence of the country. It is my intention that these non-official Burmans should be in executive charge of all those subjects which the Council of Ministers controlled before the invasion, as these departments return to civil control.

The Governor then set about forming his Executive Council, whose members, as he had indicated, were to exercise the powers held by the Ministers before the Japanese invasion; but the task proved extraordinarily difficult. The pre-war party system had ceased to exist, and a number of the most eminent of the pre-war political leaders were absent from the country. For example, Ba Maw was still in Japan, whither he had gone shortly after the occupation of Rangoon by the Allies; U Saw was still under detention in Uganda; and Thakin Ba Sein and U Tun Oke had been removed to Indonesia by the Japanese at Ba Maw's request and had not yet returned to Burma. Most of the remaining political leaders of note were associated with the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, the only notable exceptions being Sir Paw Tun and Sir Htoon Aung Gyaw, who had accompanied the Governor to India in 1942 and on this account were regarded by the extreme nationalists as being pro-British.

It was thus necessary to invite the leaders of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League to assume office. U Aung San and his associates, however, demanded that, of the fifteen Executive Councillorships authorized by an Order in Council of 28 September 1945, they should occupy eleven and that they should distribute these among themselves at their will. The Governor, on the other hand, suggested a Council of eleven members, in which the League should have seven portfolios to be distributed by himself. The League further demanded that one of the portfolios placed at their disposal should be that of the Home Department, but the Governor wished to allocate this to Sir Paw Tun. His reason, apart from any sense of obligation to Paw Tun, was that the Home Department portfolio carried with it the executive responsibility for the postings of administrative officers and of the police, and it was suspected that the League wished to use this authority as a political instrument so as to influence the elections when these were at last held.

Besides, it was known that the League had ruled that any of its members who took office were to report all proceedings to the League's Supreme Council and were to be guided by the League's directives. The pretensions of the League were viewed with distaste by the British authorities for the further reason that its objective was clearly the establishment of a one-party régime, and the Governor was not prepared to hand over power to any single party until a free and fair election had been held.

The negotiations for the entry of members of the League into the Council therefore broke down, and, when the Council was appointed on 3 November 1945, it contained one European civil servant as deputy chairman, the two political leaders who had gone to India in 1942, and seven others who had figured in the political scene before the war but had not adhered to the League. The Secretary of the Council was a Burman member of the civil service. In January 1946 one additional Burman councillor was appointed. On 31 December 1945 the Governor nominated a Legislative Council consisting of thirty-four members besides the members of the Executive Council. Of the additional thirty-four, three were Europeans, three Indians, four Karens, and one Chinese.

The machinery of constitutional government had thus been created, but it did not work. There was active opposition on the part of the League, and the League was the only organized political party in the country. The Councillors endeavoured to revive the various parties which they had led in pre-war days, but with little success; and, even when U Saw, who was perhaps the most forceful figure in Burmese politics, was released from internment and repatriated in January 1946, he had little success in reestablishing his *Myochit* Party, while Ba Maw, who was repatriated from Japan in August 1946, did not even attempt to re-enter the Burmese political arena. Thus the Councillors lacked confidence, because they did not know how long the present situation could last. They felt that their position depended entirely on British support—in the first instance from the Governor and, in the last resort, from the British armed forces still in the country; but these British armed forces were rapidly diminishing in numbers as the process of demobilization went on, and, as their strength dwindled, the agitation of the League became more violent. The Councillors were in consequence reluctant to take decisions, while the Governor, acting strictly in accordance with constitutional principle, had perforce to wait for decisions and proposals from them which never came. Moreover, since at this time Burma had no revenues of her own and was entirely dependent on the British Government in the United Kingdom for funds, the dead hand of the Treasury in Whitehall lay heavy on the administration.³ The administrative machinery was thus hardly working, and the process of rehabilitating the war-stricken country was being gravely impeded.

U Aung San's agitation, during which he addressed crowded meetings in Rangoon, took the form of denouncing the ghosts of British Imperialism

and denigrating the Governor as a 'Fascist'. His views were clearly stated in resolutions adopted at an Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League conference on 21 January 1946, in the following terms:

The cherished goal of the Burmese people is to wrest freedom from the hands of British Imperialist bondage and to exercise their right of self-determination. Therefore, we will not remain content with Dominion Status or any other status within the framework of British Imperialism. The Burmese people will determine their own destiny through a constituent assembly based on universal adult suffrage; it must be a sovereign constituent assembly, and not an Assembly elected under the aegis of British Imperialism. Pending the determination of Burma's destiny through a constituent assembly, a Provisional National Government should be formed representing all democratic sections in the country and not a Government formed to suit the interests of British Imperialism . . . Burma cannot accept the White Paper scheme and is determined to smash the same . . . Burma does not want a general election held under the Government of Burma Act, 1935. The forthcoming elections should therefore be for the formation of a Sovereign Constituent Assembly based on unicameral [*sic* -? universal] adult suffrage, the qualifying age being 18 years.

The greatest obstacle to Burma's national demand is Imperialistic Bureaucracy in the present Government, including the present Executive Council. Burma should struggle for the dissolution of the present Government and for the recognition by the world, in accordance with the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Charter, of Burma as an Independent State.⁴

Thus the League finally repudiated the policy which the British Government had adopted, and avowed its determination to accept nothing less than the establishment of an independent state outside the British Commonwealth. In addition, the League found grounds for agitation in the economic, as well as the political, policy which had been adopted by the reinstated British authorities. It had been decided by them that, if Burma's economy was to be restored in an orderly way, there must be a tight control over vital economic activities. Further, it was well known that Burmese political opinion had, in pre-war days, been strongly critical of the virtual monopoly enjoyed by European and Indian interests in the major forms of industry and commerce. It had therefore been resolved to institute a number of Project Boards—for Agriculture, Transport, Civil Supplies, Inland-Water Transport, Road Transport, and Timber—which should organize these activities until such time as conditions should have become normal and a Burman representative government should be able to decide for itself on the country's

economic policy. The Boards, however, employed as their agents the commercial concerns which had formerly been engaged in such enterprises, and hence it was suspected on the Burman side that the Project Boards were merely a subterfuge for the reinstatement of the old economic system.

The agrarian problem was also acute. For many years there had been a marked tendency in Burma for agricultural land to pass out of the hands of the cultivators into the hands of large land-holders, in many cases Indian money-lenders. During the Japanese occupation it had been impossible for landlords to collect their rents, and in effect the land had passed into the possession of the tenants, but the restored Government were bound to recognize the right of the owners, whatever agrarian policy might ultimately be adopted. Though in practice it continued to prove impossible for the owners to collect rent, the recognition of the landlords' rights caused unrest among the peasantry, and this was the more serious in view of the urgent necessity of recovering for agriculture the land which had fallen out of use. Moreover, in the past the rice crop had been financed by the money-lenders and landlords, who had advanced funds at the ploughing season in late May and June wherewith the cultivator had purchased seed-grain and any necessary implements and had maintained his family till the crop had been harvested and sold; but now, in the new circumstances, this method of financing agriculture was no longer forthcoming.

The restoration of Burma's rice industry was a major object of public policy. Before the war, Burma had been the biggest exporter of rice in the world, exporting, as she then did, an average of some 3 million tons of rice a year. These Burman supplies, which were now no longer forthcoming, were urgently needed to relieve the acute shortages that were being felt particularly in India and in Malaya. To cope with the problem, the reinstated British Government in Burma authorized loans to cultivators in April 1946 up to a maximum of 3 crores of rupees (£2¼ million) and also granted a subsidy of 12 rupees per acre on any land which, after having lain fallow in the season 1945-6, should have been brought under rice cultivation in the season 1946-7.

There were, however, other impediments to cultivation. One was the shortage of consumer goods, especially textiles. There was no incentive for the cultivator to produce crops if he could not purchase with the proceeds such essentials as clothing; and Burma was one of the sufferers from a world-wide shortage of consumer goods. An equally serious impediment was the steady deterioration in law and order.

In pre-war days Burma had suffered from the prevalence of gang robbery, generally called dacoity. In the early months of 1946 this became a serious problem. There were many arms scattered about the country. Some were a legacy from the British retreat in 1942; more had been issued by the Japanese in the last phase of the war, with the intention of embarrassing the victors; others had been distributed, perhaps without sufficient discretion, by secret

organizations, both British and American, which had been operating during the war. It was estimated that at least 50,000 weapons had come into unauthorized hands. In the early stages of the Allied occupation of Burma the presence of a vast army had kept crime in check; but, when once the process of repatriating the British troops was well advanced, the criminal elements, which had been long repressed by the effective if crude methods of the Japanese, and which were aware from past experience of the relative mildness and forbearance of British methods of administration, began to regain their courage. In coping with crime the administration was handicapped by the disorganization of the police force, which had to be reconstituted and retrained after a hiatus of more than three years, and which had not only lost its former sources of information but also suffered from being now actually less well armed than the dacoits. Insecurity became so great that by March 1946 it was no longer possible to travel along some sections of the Rangoon-Mandalay road except under armed escort. In March 1946, 929 cases of armed robbery were reported, and in April no less than 1,075; and many more must have been concealed from the police for fear of reprisals.

Under such conditions the Burman cultivator was not disposed to produce crops the proceeds of which were likely to be stolen from him and which could be grown only by his living, according to his custom, in a lonely field hut, far from his village, where he would have no security from attack.

The military authorities gave valuable assistance in grappling with the menace of dacoity, but the bulk of the work had necessarily to be carried out by the civil police. As a result of their efforts, by the middle of the year 1946 more than 15,000 dacoits were in gaol, some 10,000 suspects were awaiting trial, and more than 40,000 illicit arms and nearly 1 million rounds of ammunition had been recovered. But many arms still remained to be accounted for.

A further cause of alarm and unrest was the formation of a private army under the control of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. In November 1945 a Rangoon newspaper announced that U Aung San proposed to form an organization to inculcate military education, to interest the youth of the country in national service, and to assist the authorities in suppressing crime. Two months later, in January 1946, the newspapers published notices asking former members of the Patriotic Burmese Forces to enrol. The People's Volunteer Organization, which was thus formed, contained many members who had had some slight experience of warfare; during the early months of 1946 it began to carry out illegal drilling; and it was reported that in at least one area the volunteers were practising with live hand-grenades. The British authorities took a serious view of this development; but U Aung San asserted that the primary purpose of the Organization was merely to look after the interests of members of the Patriotic Burmese Forces who could not be absorbed into the new Burma army; he said also that the purpose of the Organization was not to challenge law and order but to

co-operate with the authorities in suppressing crime. He denied that any members of it had drilled with live hand-grenades.⁵ Estimates of the strength of the Organization varied, but 6,000 was thought to be the minimum, and it was believed in some quarters that it amounted to as many as 14,000.

The establishment of a private political army was objectionable in itself, and became more so when some of its members provided, as they did in some cases, a nucleus for some of the dacoit bands which were oppressing the country.⁶ Besides this, the threats uttered by members of the People's Volunteer Organization caused alarm and despondency among elements in the population that were disposed to support the Government, and it was stated that lists were being compiled of government servants who were not pro-League, in order that they might be dealt with according to their deserts when the League eventually came into power.

Under these conditions, violent trouble was inevitable. On 18 May 1946 there was a conflict between the People's Volunteer Organization and the police in Tantabin town, in Pegu district, in which one man was killed and two died of wounds. Relations between the League and the Government were also worsened by a suspicion which prevailed that the authorities were planning to bring U Aung San to trial on a charge of murder in respect of the death of an Indian village headman in 1942.⁷

Burma thus drifted into a state of unrest and uncertainty, intensified by the disappointment caused there, as throughout the world, by finding that the ending of the war had not brought with it a return to normal life and prosperity. The agitation of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League went on. In January 1946 they had requested permission to send a deputation to the United Kingdom to represent their case, but the proposal had been refused on the ground that the British Government were not prepared to negotiate with one political party only, and that representations on political questions ought to be addressed to the Governor in the first place. But the League continued its activities and it was stimulated by the encouragement that it had received in its contacts with some political circles in Great Britain. Meanwhile, preparations had been started for the holding of elections, perhaps in 1947; and the British Parliament passed legislation providing for a new franchise in Burma on the basis of universal suffrage for males over eighteen years of age and also for women over eighteen if literate.

In June 1946 Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith found it necessary to return to England for reasons of health, and his medical advisers recommended him not to go back to Burma. After an interim lasting for a few weeks, in which the Governorship had been held temporarily by Sir Henry Knight, of the Indian Civil Service, the post was filled by Major-General Sir Hubert Rance, who had been Director of the Civil Affairs Service, Burma, and who, on the strength of his having spent some months in Burma, was regarded as being well acquainted with the situation. Rance arrived in Rangoon on 30 August 1946, and, in a speech delivered in the City Hall in Rangoon on 2 September,

he stated that it would be part of his task to ensure that elections could be held in the following spring, and also indicated that his Executive Council was likely to be reformed. Before any such steps could be taken, however, the new Governor was confronted by a general strike of police, which soon spread to the subordinate ranks of all government services.

The root cause of these strikes was economic. The cost of living now stood at approximately four times its pre-war level, and the pay of subordinate officials was quite inadequate to enable them to live decently under such conditions. So long as the Civil Affairs Service had continued, all government servants had been supplied with free rations and had been enabled to make purchases at military canteens; but, as from 31 March 1946, these privileges had ceased, while representations about the cost of living had remained unanswered by the Finance Department. The situation was particularly bad in the case of the police, who bore heavy responsibilities, had to resist considerable temptations, and were expected to risk their lives at frequent intervals in combating dacoits, and all this in return for lower pay than was being given to domestic servants.

On 5 September 1946 the Rangoon Police went on strike; the strike quickly spread to other districts; and by the 23rd of the month a general strike of subordinate government employees was in operation throughout the country. Though the strike was economic in origin, it took a political turn, and it was exploited by the Anti-Fascist People's League as a means of destroying the Executive Council.

It became apparent that the strike would not be allowed to end so long as the present Council remained in office, and therefore on 17 September its members resigned. On 26 September the Governor announced the formation of a new Council of nine members. Of these, six were representatives of the League, including one Communist; the other three were U Saw and Thakin Ba Sein, the leaders of the *Myochit* and the *Dobama Asiayon* Parties respectively, and a retired civil servant, U Tin Tut. It was also announced that the portfolios of Home Affairs and of External Affairs and Defence would both go to representatives of the League; that there was to be some relaxation of United Kingdom Treasury control; and that, while the Governor would retain control over the Frontier Areas, he would keep the Council fully informed about their affairs.

The League had thus triumphed. It had secured the principal offices on its own terms, and had freed the Government from the control of the United Kingdom Treasury. From that time onward Burma was in fact fully self-governing; for, although in name the administration was still being carried on by the Governor under Section 139 of the Government of Burma Act, 1935, in practice the Governor had no longer any control over the Executive Council.

Thus the League had carried out a revolution by bringing the administration to a complete standstill; and, since the new régime was the offspring of

revolution, it was not to be expected that violence would cease to afflict the country. On 21 September an attempt was made to assassinate U Saw, and, though he escaped with his life, he suffered injury to one of his eyes. The perpetrators of this outrage were never arrested, but it was common knowledge that in U Saw's view it had been instigated by U Aung San in an endeavour to eliminate the only man who might perhaps succeed in rivalling him in influence; it was also known that in U Saw's opinion the efforts of the police to trace the criminals had been sabotaged at U Aung San's orders.

Within the bosom of the League there were also difficulties. Relations between the Communists and the remainder of the League had deteriorated. There were two Burman Communist Parties, the Burma Communist Party and the Communist Party (Burma), of which the latter was the more radical. The Communist Party (Burma) had been declared an unlawful association by the Government in July 1946, and U Aung San had refused to associate himself with any protests against this measure, though, on taking office, he did secure the lifting of the ban on this party. His attitude towards the Burma Communist Party was more favourable, and he accepted Thakin Thein Pe, one of its leading members, as an Executive Councillor; but on 13 October it was reported that the League had expelled the Burma Communist Party from its ranks on the grounds that it had tried to disrupt the League's unity, had endeavoured to displace U Aung San from the leadership, and had embarrassed the League in inciting unrest among peasants and workers even after the general strike had been settled on 2 October. After this, Thakin Thein Pe resigned office—denouncing U Aung San and his associates as 'tools of the policy of repression' and accusing them of 'collaborating with imperialism'.⁸

Having thus first gained a signal victory over the British Government and then closed its ranks by the elimination of the Communists, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League took a further step. As early as 27 October U Aung San stated in a public meeting that the struggle for independence would continue, and on 8 November the Executive Council declared that its policy was 'to establish a sovereign state . . . without unnecessary delay'.⁹ On 13 November it was stated in the Burman press that the Working Committee of the League had decided that by 31 January 1947 the British Government must declare that Burma would be given freedom within one year, that elections would be held without any foreign interference, and that the Executive Council would be transformed into a National Government. Failing the acceptance of these terms, the representatives of the League would resign from the Council.¹⁰

It was known that this ultimatum was to be backed by force; preparations were in hand for a country-wide rising against the administration; and the administration no longer had the military strength with which to cope with such a threat. The introduction into Burma of additional British troops was the only means by which the projected rebellion could be prevented or

repressed, and in the United Kingdom there was no disposition to take militant action.

On 20 December the British Prime Minister stated in the House of Commons that representative members of the Executive Council had been invited to come to London for discussions. In regard to the demand for transformation of the Executive Council into a National Government, he stated that:

His Majesty's Government are of opinion that the Burmese Government which has now been formed should, within the existing Constitution, exercise a full measure of authority in Burma. It is not possible, of course, as was pointed out in the case of India, to enact a new interim Constitution, and the old Constitution must, therefore, be carried on in form, but His Majesty's Government have no desire to interfere with the day to day administration, which is now in the hands of Burmese members of the Governor's Executive. We shall endeavour in the forthcoming discussions to remove any difficulties that the delegates may still feel to exist in this regard.¹¹

This offer was accepted by the League, though it reiterated its threat that its representatives would resign office unless it should have been agreed by 31 January 1947 that the present Executive Council would become an Interim Government with full powers, that elections would be held for a Constituent Assembly, and that Burma would be completely independent within one year.¹²

These developments were viewed with some apprehension by many of the non-Burman indigenous inhabitants of the country. The avowed policy of the Anti-Fascist Freedom League was to bring the peoples of the Frontier Areas into close union with Burma proper, and attempts had been made to seek their co-operation; but in the case of one minority race, the Karens, agreement proved not to be possible. While a minority of the Karens lived in the hills in the eastern part of Burma, the majority of them lived in the Irrawaddy Delta and the Tenasserim Division, interspersed among the Burman population there; and unfortunately there was a long history of racial antagonism between the two peoples, which had culminated in savage massacres of Karens by unruly members of the Burma Independence Army at the time of the withdrawal of the lawful administration in 1942. In June 1945 an assembly of leading Karens had been held in Rangoon, and a demand for the formation of a separate administrative area for the Karens, which had been put forward nearly twenty years before, was now revived. A Karen Central Organization was established to press this claim, which, as the Karens saw it, ought to commend itself to the British Government in view of the courageous services of the Karen people to the Allied cause during the darkest days of the war and during the campaign of 1944-5. In July 1946 a Karen Goodwill Mission was sent to the United Kingdom to plead the

Karen case and to ask for the maintenance of British protection for the Karen people, but it was disappointed by meeting with a cool reception. The Karens viewed with dislike and fear a policy by which the whole of Burma, and with it their own destiny, was being handed over to a group who had fought on behalf of the Japanese and some of whom had committed grievous atrocities against a local people who had resolutely opposed the Japanese; and, though a minority gave support to the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, the most influential of the Karen leaders were, by the end of 1946, on the verge of reaching a decision not to participate in any scheme of independence for Burma.

During the sixteen months that had elapsed since Japan's surrender, Burma's relations with foreign countries had been overshadowed by the problem of her relations with Great Britain. But, though they had received little attention, her relations with China had not been easy. The boundary between the two countries north of parallel 25° 35' N. had never been agreed, and Chinese forces operating in this area during the war had shown a disposition to treat the inhabitants as Chinese subjects and an inclination to settle down in the country. They had been induced to depart; but in January 1946 a Chinese incursion took place farther south. Nearly 400 troops crossed the frontier and occupied Waingmaw, on the Irrawaddy opposite Myitkyina, on the pretext that they had come to take over engineering installations on the Paoshan-Myitkyina road, which had been constructed for military purposes during the war, and to arrest Chinese deserters. Their commander held a meeting of local Chinese and invited them to report any unjust treatment by the British; he also informed the British authorities that, if there were any trouble in which Chinese troops were killed, he would arrest those responsible. Representations to Chung-king, however, and the assembly in the neighbourhood of a powerful military force, led to the withdrawal of the Chinese force after it had been encamped on Burman soil for nearly five weeks.¹³

Relations with Siam presented no problem. The two Shan States of Kengtung and Mongpan, which had been annexed by Siam under Japanese auspices, had been now recovered by Burma, and the two countries had reverted to their former condition of political insulation from one another. The Burma-Siam Railway, which had been the cause of the death of an unknown number of thousands of victims, had now ceased to function; on the Burma side of the frontier the material had been removed to restore the major lines of communication elsewhere in the country, and the material that had been taken from Burma by the Japanese for use on the Siamese side had been sold to Siam. Thus, once more, there was no modern means of communication on the ground between the two countries. On 18 December 1946 a memorial service at the Burma terminus of the railway at the village of Thanbyuzayat was held in memory of the dead; the ceremony was attended by the Governor and the principal political personages of Burma, together with

representatives of the Governments of Australia, the Netherlands, the United States of America, China, Malaya, India, and Siam. The Bishop of Rangoon conducted a Christian service, and a Buddhist ceremony was held simultaneously.

In spite of the distracted state of Burma, much had been done by the end of 1946 to restore its economy. The greater part of the railway system was now once again in operation, and the inland water transport system was working with craft taken over from the military authorities and adapted for commercial purposes. There were still acute shortages of consumer goods, however, and prices remained high. Exports of timber had hardly begun again, and, owing to a shortage of equipment, little was yet possible in the way of production of minerals. As for Burma's vital commodity, rice, only 100,300 metric tons were exported during 1945 and 431,400 during 1946, as contrasted with the pre-war export of considerably more than 3 million tons.

Notes

- 1 Great Britain, Burma Office: *Statement of Policy . . . May 1945*, Cmd. 6635 (London, H.M.S.O., 1945).
- 2 *Liberator* (Rangoon), 11 September 1945.
- 3 G. Appleton: 'Burma Two Years After Liberation', *International Affairs*, October 1947, xxiii. 510-21.
- 4 *Liberator* (Rangoon), 24 January 1946.
- 5 *New Times of Burma*, 10 May 1946.
- 6 T. L. Hughes: 'Recent Progress in Burma', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, January 1947, xxxiv. 40-41.
- 7 *The Times* Rangoon correspondent, 5 April 1946.
- 8 *New Times of Burma*, 30 October 1946.
- 9 *Ibid.* 8 November 1946.
- 10 *Ibid.* 13 November 1946.
- 11 20 December 1946, H. C. Deb. 5th ser., vol. 431, col. 2342.
- 12 *Burman* (Rangoon), 24 December 1946.
- 13 *New Times of Burma*, 17 March 1946.

BRITISH 'BLUE PRINT' FOR BURMA

Alice Thorner

Source: *Far Eastern Survey* 14(10) (1945): 126-8.

Although almost the whole of Burma has been reoccupied, Britain has made no official declaration of her postwar plans for that country. Last November there appeared under the sponsorship of the Conservative Party's Imperial Affairs Committee a "Blue Print" for Burma, drawn up by a group of lesser-known Conservative Members of Parliament. One month after the publication of the report Mr. Somerset de Chair, the chairman of the "Blue Print" committee, offered in Parliament an amendment to the address from the throne regretting that there was no mention of plans for the administration and future development of Burma. Upon this motion ensued the first Burma debate in Commons in ten years! Although the net result was a polite but firm refusal by the Government to commit itself further at the time, the main purpose of Mr. de Chair's group was achieved. Burma re-entered the focus of British public discussion.

Assume dominion status

The "Blue Print" of the Conservative Party assumes that Burma aspires to self-government as a member of the British Commonwealth, and deserves United Kingdom support in this respect. Within this frame of reference the plan calls for following the complete reoccupation of Burma by a reconstruction period of fixed duration—six years is the suggested maximum. During this period authority is to be vested in a British Governor assisted by an appointed Council of representative Burmans. Meanwhile, the handling of Burma affairs in London would be transferred from the India Office to a special department in the Dominions Office. At the close of the period a permanent constitution drawn up with the aid of the Council would be submitted to a broadly elected representative assembly.

The constitution, after its approval, is projected as establishing self-government subject to the conclusion of treaties between the new Burmese

Government and the Imperial Government providing for British military, naval and air bases; for reasonable protection of British nationals engaged in industry and trade; and for "the conduct of external relations". The Shans, Chins, Kachins, and Karens of northern and eastern Burma (the Excluded States under the 1935 Constitution) are not to form part of the new Burmese Dominion until such time as they clearly express a desire to join it.

To facilitate Burma's economic rehabilitation the "Blue Print" presents a radical land policy and a novel method for controlling the return to Burma of British industry and commerce. The suggestion for agricultural reform proposes to take advantage of wartime dislocations and free all farm land from non-cultivating ownership. This means, in large part, from the ownership of the Indian chettyars (a group of money-lenders from Southern India), many of whom fled before the Japanese and will find it difficult to prove their titles upon return to Burma. The "Blue Print" authors estimate that the chettyars would settle for a cash payment of approximately thirty percent of the face value of their investments, and propose that the money to compensate them come from a loan supplied by the Imperial Government and secured on the revenues of Burma. A Land Bank, financed and controlled by the Burmese Government, is recommended as a temporary expedient; cooperative credit is seen as the long-term solution.

In regard to the re-establishment of British commerce and industry, the "Blue Print" would offer full compensation for war losses only to those firms which are willing to return to Burma and resume operations on a satisfactory basis. The administrative headquarters of the companies must be housed in Rangoon and not London, their capital must be arranged in rupees and be saleable on the Rangoon exchange, and they must institute systematic plans of apprenticeship and training of Burmese. It is further proposed that if Burmese investors do not cooperate, the Government of Burma might itself become a partner in industrial enterprise.

Discussion in Parliament and press

The discussion aroused by the "Blue Print" both in Parliament and in the press centered on three main questions: the political expediency of a formal declaration of British intentions, the nature and timing of self-government for Burma, and goals for the future Burmese economy.

Opening the parliamentary debate on December 12, 1944, Mr. Somerset de Chair urged that His Majesty's Government make an early declaration of its intentions. The present lack of a clear statement, he argued, represented a gap in British political warfare at a time when the Japanese had fanned the flames of Burmese nationalism by granting "independence" to a puppet regime. Mr. Sidney Shepard, secretary of the "Blue Print" committee, seconded Mr. de Chair on this point with a quotation from a speech made by Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma, to the East India

Association in 1942: "Politically-minded Burmans . . . are wondering just what our intentions towards Burma are . . . We have everything to gain and nothing to lose by being perfectly explicit as to our intentions." Sir Stanley Reed, also a member of the committee, expressed the fear that a general statement promising self-government "as soon as possible" would be regarded as a breach of faith by the Burmese. He called upon Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for Burma, "to make his explanation today clear beyond doubt to the Burman that we go back there as liberators to establish him as master in his own country". Arthur Creech-Jones, Parliamentary Secretary to Ernest Bevin and the only Laborite to take part in the Burma debate, also argued for an immediate British statement.

Mr. Amery, in reply, recalled the London visit in 1941 of U Saw, then premier, who hoped to obtain a categorical pledge that as soon as the war was over Burma would be set up as a self-governing Dominion. At that time, Mr. Amery said, he did not feel he could give U Saw a more precise assurance than that Britain would help Burma to attain Dominion status "as speedily and as fully as possible". He still felt, he continued, that the time had not come for a further public commitment. It would be unfortunate, said Mr. Amery, to announce programs "which we might afterwards be forced with some discredit to go back on". However, "it may well be that the time will come—perhaps not in the dim future—when the course of events will be clearer and when an announcement may be not only possible but valuable in assuring good will and cooperation."

Political temper of Burmese

The writers of the "Blue Print" argued that no less than a substantial degree of independence would be acceptable to the Burmese. They noted that after the passage of the Constitution of 1935, which transferred considerable powers to the Burmese Government, there was nonetheless, in the words of Dorman-Smith, "a general feeling of discontent". Now, they judged, "having drunk this heady wine of nominal independence", the Burmese would be "even more strongly imbued with the spirit of nationalism".

With this estimate of the political temper of the Burmese there was no disagreement. But from both left and right the British press pounced upon the specific proposals of the "Blue Print" as being far too stingy to attract Burmese support or even to fulfill past British pledges. The London *Times* of November 15, recalling the 1935 promise to Burma that separation from India would not prejudice her future constitutional development and Mr. Amery's 1941 statement reaffirming the goal of Dominion status, declared: "In the light of these undertakings Burmese national sentiment . . . will be content with nothing less than the Cripps offer . . ."

Cripps offer as criterion

Interestingly enough, both the editors of the leftist *New Statesman and Nation* in the issue of November 18 and Hla Myint, a Burmese writing in the liberal *Manchester Guardian* on December 6, followed the conservative *Times* in using the Cripps offer as a criterion. The "Blue Print", in the view of these journals, amounts to a lesser offer than the Cripps proposals because the imposition of a reconstruction period would delay self-government; and the provisions for defense bases, control of foreign policy, and exclusion of tribal areas would limit self-government in Burma.

Several critics of the "Blue Print" attacked the period of six years suggested for reconstruction as unduly long. Even Mr. de Chair reported to Commons that the Burmese Refugees Association in Simla did not think the period of reconstruction "should be extended beyond any period of years strictly necessary for the re-establishment of orderly administration and the inauguration of essential measures of reconstruction". Mr. Creech-Jones, in this debate, was concerned lest post-dating the independence promise too far ahead might react unfavorably upon Imperial prestige. He said, "The United States will be handling the Philippines and her attempt at speedy political liberation will be proclaimed as the model which should inspire Britain in her relation to Burma."

The provision for rule during this period by a British Governor assisted by an appointed Burmese Council also fared rather badly in the public discussion. Hla Myint in the article already cited wrote that "Informed and unbiased observers both in Britain and in India are agreed in rejecting the "Blue Print's" proposal to have a reconstruction period under the direct rule of the Governor." The *Economist* of December 18 suggested cautiously that "as much authority as possible should be transferred" to the Council of Burmese. Maurice Collis, former Rangoon Magistrate writing in the *Observer* of December 18, warned that "hope of a happy issue in Burma remains faint unless the British Government, on the reoccupation of Rangoon, makes a very early pronouncement of its immediate intention to reassemble the Burmese Parliament which was in existence at the time of the Japanese invasion." From Burman critics of the "Blue Print", according to the *New Statesman* of December 23, "comes the demand that the Governor during the interim period shall be a Burman".

A lively debate ensued on the question of who should draw up the constitution for an independent Burma. In Commons, Squadron-Leader Donner, a Conservative but not a member of the "Blue Print" group, made the interesting suggestion that the constitutional assembly be dominated by village headmen rather than "Europeanized intelligentsia". Mr. Nicholson, one of the "Blue Print" authors, rose to correct his colleagues' misapprehension that the "Blue Print" called for any constitutional assembly at all. "You would get a much sounder constitution", Nicholson argued, "by the appointment of a

representative Council of Burmese to assist the Governor in the work of reconstruction and constitution-making than if the constitution were to be drawn up in the full glare of limelight . . . We should not hand over responsibility for the constitution of Burma to a constituent assembly for any reason whatever."

Controversial economic questions

Controversial questions in the economic field were the future position of the Indian chettiyars, the compensation of British interests, and the desirability of further British investment. The sharpest issue which Amery took with any single element of the "Blue Print" was with the proposition that the flight of the majority of the Indians in 1942 left a clean slate upon which the Burmese could begin anew their agricultural ownership and indebtedness records. The Secretary of State for India and Burma pointed out that many of the chettiyars had lived in Burma since before 1886, and that many others now in India also wished to return. He went along with the "Blue Print" in agreeing that some scheme for repurchase of land would have to be worked out, but was concerned over the policy towards India. Mr. Amery notwithstanding, the *Economist* saw Indian ownership as an even greater menace than any British interests to Burma's economic independence. Considering the need for bringing Burmese into economic control of their own country, the *Economist* wrote "The biggest single matter is the Indian problem . . . In many cases the industries and rice-fields of Burma have been subject to a galling remote control from Madras and elsewhere. There will be no economic future for Burma unless this balance is redressed."

The "Blue Print's" scheme for repayment of British firms was opposed by the *New Statesman*: "The demand that this Dominion shall compensate British capitalists for all their losses during the war would infuriate an even milder people than the Burmese." Mr. Shepard in the parliamentary discussion noted that His Majesty's Government has obligated itself, in reply to representations made in August 1942 on behalf of commercial interests in the Far East, to assisting the colonies in replacing damaged or destroyed properties should their own resources be insufficient. The undertaking was later made specifically applicable to Burma.

The *London Times*, in opposing a return of British capital to Burma, went so far as to contemplate the abandonment of the whole idea of modern industrial development there. The "Blue Print" authors, in the opinion of the *Times*, failed to recognize "the extent of Burmese indifference, if not active hostility, to the restoration of the old economy". The question was raised by the *Times* as to whether the Burmese might not prefer a lower standard to foreign control.

Hla Myint denied that his countrymen would be incapable of large-scale enterprise. The Burmese, according to Hla Myint, are not by nature

thrifless, lazy, and averse to trade; rather they are by economic pressure too poor to save, fully or seasonally unemployed, and discriminated against in the selection of commercial agents by European firms. Although he wanted no more of "foreign economic domination", Hla Myint held that the future Burma must have international trade, overseas capital, and foreign technicians. State action, he continued, would be required to ensure that Burma's foreign economic relations serve as an instrument of economic welfare for the Burmese.

Secretary Amery, in discussing the economic aspects, pictured British interests in Burma voluntarily ordering their affairs so as to convince the Burmese people that "capital is given to help them to do what they cannot do for themselves and to bring more wealth into the country than it takes out of the country". British capital, he stated, is prepared to bring Burmese into a greater measure of both financial and administrative partnership and to provide the necessary training.

Rehabilitation test of policy

Commenting on the parliamentary debate, the *Economist* raised the question as to whether the "economics of reconstruction" might not prove more significant than the "politics of independence". At any rate, the *Economist* urged, economic rehabilitation should receive priority as the first task of the British in Burma. "By their way of setting about it they can amply prove whether they seriously intend independence." Seen in this light it is perhaps noteworthy that although Amery did not commit Britain to guaranteeing Burma Dominion status within any specified period of time, he did pledge in the name of His Majesty's Government a program of economic reconstruction involving not merely a return to prewar conditions but a rise to a higher level of social existence. "Our objective," he said, "is perfectly clear. It is a prosperous, contented people on a high level of well-being and capable of sustaining as soon as possible the responsibility of conducting their own affairs."

THE FUTURE OF BURMA

J. S. Furnivall

Source: *Pacific Affairs* 18(2) (1945): 156-68.

The "Blue-print for Burma" is a document drawn up by certain Conservative Members of Parliament and recommended by the Chairman of the Conservative Imperial Affairs Committee as a bold and constructive policy for the future of Burma.¹ It attempts to portray the background of the problem, defines the objective of policy, and submits proposals which may be grouped under three main headings: Political, Economic, including compensation for war damage, and Defense.

The background

Subject to minor qualifications which it is unnecessary to specify, and except for one notable omission, the description of the background may be accepted as substantially correct. The Committee recognizes that "one of the strongest forces in Burma is the intense desire of its people for the control of their own affairs," and that it "would be highly dangerous to dismiss Burman nationalism as something of no account." It recognizes also that Burmans have substantial grievances on economic grounds. The economic development of Burma has proceeded at "break-neck speed." But the industry was in British hands, the commerce in British, Indian and Chinese hands, and the labor force was largely Indian. Although the country has flourished as a business concern "the Burmans have had little part in this growth; on the contrary their position has deteriorated." Their economic activities have been restricted to agriculture, and as cultivators they have steadily grown poorer. The report accepts a statement that about "half the population have been reduced from the status of landowners to that of tenants, or in some cases even of landless laborers; while the remaining half are burdened with a debt which probably amounts to an average of Rs. 200 (£15) per household, or not much less than a year's income. In many cases their prospect of ever getting out of debt, or even of

avoiding the same reduction as has befallen the other half of the population is remote."

The Report throws further light on the situation from the trade returns. In 1939-40 the exports were over Rs. 540 million and the imports Rs. 252 million. Expressed in terms of the two chief items of commerce, for every hundred baskets of rice sent abroad from Burma, it received in return cotton goods to the value of less than fifty baskets. That is a normal feature of the trade returns. The balance is often explained as made good by invisible imports. In fact, however, a large part (though no one can say how large a part) of the surplus of exports over imports represents profits for which no service is rendered; to that extent the imports are invisible because they do not exist. Moreover, of the visible imports a large and increasing share were for non-Burmans. These consisted largely of capital goods intended to increase the profits of western enterprise; they paid also for services rendered in the cause not of national welfare, but of economic development; and they represented an unnecessarily profuse expenditure on personal amenities among the wealthier classes, almost exclusively non-Burman, and on display in administrative and commercial buildings. (Even in Rangoon there was no museum or art gallery, and, one may almost say, no public library.)

The Report, however, ignores one important aspect of life in Burma, which bears immediately on future policy. It is silent as to social disorganization, to the decay of the national religion, monastic institutions and the national system of education, to clerical disorder, to the alarming prevalence and growth of crime, and to the corruption rampant in all branches of the administration.

Moreover, apart from suggestions (pp. 6, 16) that these unsatisfactory conditions arose because economic development took precedence over social welfare and national interest, the Report does not attempt to trace their cause or causes. It also contains no indication whether the government was unable to prevent them or unwilling to prevent them. In either case, whether the former government could not or would not change them, people interested in the welfare of Burmans will wish to be assured that the future government will be both able and willing to produce different results, and the apparent omission to enquire into causes necessarily impairs confidence in the remedies proposed.

Objective

In defining the goal of British policy in Burma the Committee recognizes and accepts two pledges given by the Imperial Government: that Burma is to attain Dominion status, and that its constitutional development shall not be hindered by its separation from India. Dominion status implies that Burmans shall possess full self-government and that Burma shall be linked to

Great Britain solely by ties of interest and affection, and, therefore, that it shall be capable of independence.

The objective envisaged by the Committee is rather different. It looks forward to full self-government in Burma subject to the reservation of certain Imperial rights, including reasonable security for British nationals engaged in the industrial and commercial rehabilitation of the country and safeguards (though possibly under some other name) for British and Indian capital, enterprise and specialist knowledge.

Burmans, we are told, desire self-government "either as part of the Commonwealth and Empire, or completely independent." But very few Burmans understand the implications of independence or know anything of the modern world; they have their own way of life and, for the most part, want to follow it without interference from foreigners. That is impossible. It is inevitable that Burma shall contribute its resources as fully as possible to world welfare, and this is desirable in the interest of Burmans so far as it does not hinder progress towards autonomy. But until Burmans are in a position to resist aggression they need help in enforcing the terms on which access to the resources of the country shall be allowed; and until they are able to control economic development they need help in controlling it in the interest of national welfare. The picture of the country in the above sketch of its conditions shows that at present it is incapable of complete independence. Unless the social and economic conditions allow of independence, forms of self-government are futile. Great Britain should be best able to help Burma to become capable of independence. Among Burmans, however, only an enlightened minority realize that they need outside assistance and among these, many, if not most, are suspicious of British offers of assistance; and the conditions that have developed under British rule afford reasonable ground for mistrust. The connection between Burma and Great Britain might and should be far more useful to Burmans than to the British, but very few Burmans appreciate this fact. If proposals for reconstruction are to be effective they must be sound in themselves, they must capture the imagination of the Burmese people, and must gain the confidence of their leaders. The proposals in the Blue Print fail to satisfy any one of these three conditions, and in some ways, especially with regard to the reservations, although the Committee recognizes that every effort should be made to carry the good will of Burmans, are likely to arouse mistrust.

Proposals for defense

The Committee recommends the creation of a Burma Defense Force, recruited as far as possible from Burmans and officered by Burmans, with British advice and assistance. This is to provide for "local defense and internal security." It is to be supplemented for "the strategic defense of S. E. Asia" by constitutional reservations as to naval bases, military stations and

air force stations. The project of a national army is an obvious condition of making Burma capable of independence, and the stipulations with regard to naval bases etc. are capable of an interpretation to the mutual benefit of Great Britain and Burma. Much depends on the application of these proposals, but it must not be overlooked that the creation of a national army demands that the internal economy shall be compatible with the spirit of Burman nationalism, and that the Government shall enjoy the confidence of the people.

Economic proposals

1. Industry and Commerce. It is regarded as of the first importance that the former companies and firms shall be placed in a position to resume their activities because industrial "rehabilitation" is essential to sustain the standards of life and administration of the pre-war era, and "they alone have the experience, the staff, and the special knowledge required." But their special knowledge should give them an advantage without exceptional consideration. Their experience was gained, and their staff was working, under conditions which allowed economic development precedence over social interests; they will tend to work on the old lines, and strict control over their activities will be necessary if these are not to hinder rather than promote the attainment of autonomy. The Report recognizes that control will be required if the future is not "to reproduce conditions incompatible with the spirit of Burmese nationalism," and recommends the adoption of a systematic plan for training Burmans to take a full part in industrial and commercial life. It is disquieting to note the insistence on "reasonable security for British nationals engaged in the industrial and economic rehabilitation of the country," and that British and Indian capital, enterprise and specialist knowledge should be assured of equal opportunity, treatment and scope under the national government as during the early days of reconstruction under direct British rule. We are to assume that whether under direct British rule or under a national government, the primary aim of policy is to make Burma capable of independence. In that case all foreign enterprise should be encouraged so far, and only so far, as it conduces to that end, and there is no reason to discriminate between British or Indian or American or Chinese enterprise, although German or Japanese activities must naturally for some time remain suspect as possibly political rather than economic. The suggestions contained in the Report for controlling foreign enterprise and for developing Burman enterprise are inadequate, and no provision is made for enforcing them. It would seem necessary that all non-Burman enterprise should be allowed only under a license embodying such conditions as the promotion of economic autonomy may require and periodically renewable and subject to revocation at short notice for failure to comply with the conditions.

2. Agriculture. The Committee proposes to expropriate all non-cultivating

owners, Indian and Burman, subject to compensation, though without suggesting whether the compensation is to be paid by the present occupants or out of public revenue, or how doubtful claimants to compensation are to prove their title. It recommends also that in future the transfer of land from cultivators to non-cultivators shall be prevented by restrictions along the lines of the Punjab Land Alienation Act, though with no indication as to how far the provisions of this Act may be applicable to Burma. These measures would be unpopular and impracticable. (1) Even in England measures to expropriate non-cultivating land-owners would be resisted (not least strenuously, one imagines, by the signatories to the Report). But in Burma every non-cultivator who is not too poor, invests money in land, and any attempt to expropriate them would excite general opposition from those who, by reason of their wealth and position, carry most weight among the people. (2) Previous attempts to distinguish between cultivating and non-cultivating owners have been found impracticable. (3) Attempts to restrict the acquisition of land by non-cultivators have proved to be beyond the capacity of the administration in the past, and it seems optimistic to assume that the post-war administration will be more efficient. Any such project will need a revolution in administrative organization and methods which, although indispensable for social welfare, finds no recognition in the Report. If the Provisional Government tries to introduce the measures recommended in connection with land-ownership it will stir up widespread disaffection, and their inevitable failure will bring it into contempt. On the other hand, expropriation at postwar values of land to which absentee non-Burmans could prove a title would be both popular and practicable.

With respect to agricultural indebtedness the Blue Print recommends the payment of a lump sum to Indian creditors, estimated at 30 per cent of the amount nominally due. It makes no suggestions as to the manner in which creditors shall prove their claims, or as to precautions against doubtful or fraudulent claims. Future indebtedness is to be prevented by the rigorous enforcement of restrictions on credit, and by the constitution of a Land Bank, financed and controlled by the administration, secured on the general revenues, and staffed apparently in part by the pre-war chettyars. The last point suggests an equal ignorance of chettyar banking practice and of Burmese psychology. In any case a Land Bank can deal with only a limited aspect of agricultural indebtedness, and excessive agricultural indebtedness is only one symptom of an unsound agricultural economy.

Other problems of agricultural reconstruction are apparently regarded as too difficult for the Provisional Government and are to be left for solution to the National Government that is to take its place. One matter that will almost certainly be of pressing urgency in the immediate postwar years, not only in Burma but throughout South East Asia, the rehabilitation of the stock of plough cattle, is wholly ignored. The agricultural economy of Burma certainly raises questions of immense difficulty, but there is nothing

in these proposals to suggest that the authors were competent to submit recommendations, or to inspire confidence that the Government of Burma will show greater resolution and ability in finding solutions for them after the war than it did before the war.

3. Compensation. The Committee is of the opinion that British (and presumably Indian, including chettyar) firms operating in Burma shall be entitled to compensation for material loss or damage arising out of the war or the enemy occupation, but that full compensation should be paid only to firms that are willing to re-start their operations on a satisfactory basis; apparently partial compensation is to be paid to firms that do not accept such conditions as are thought satisfactory, and even to firms that do not return to Burma. They support this view by reference to a pronouncement that His Majesty's Government will aim at repairing damage "with a view to the well-being of the people and the resumption of productive activity." The compensation is to be charged, so far as practicable, to the revenue of Burma. The terms of the pronouncement would seem clearly to rule out compensation to firms that do not return. The Report contemplates that with a view to the well-being of the people, certain restrictions should be imposed on economic activities; this would seem to rule out the payment of any compensation to firms that do not accept such restrictions. If the goal of British policy be to make Burma as speedily as possible capable of independence, the restrictions would be imposed with that object in view. The firms will resume their activities if these seem likely to be profitable, but not otherwise. So far as the resumption of their activities is thought desirable, the Government of Burma will presumably, so far as its means allow, assist them in replacing and repairing destroyed or damaged goods and property to the extent that this may be necessary to induce them to restart their operations. The pronouncement cited does not seem to warrant the payment of compensation in excess of this amount, and any such payment regarded by Burmans as excessive would prejudice those harmonious relations which the Committee recognizes as essential to the success of reconstruction. The Report of the Committee suggests, however, that it anticipates the payment of compensation on a much larger scale, without reference either to the well-being of the people or the resumption of activities. Large or small, the compensation would constitute an annual charge on the revenues of Burma to be passed on as a liability from the provisional government to the national government; provision against default by the national government is examined below.

Political proposals

In the view of the Committee, the Imperial Government, as soon as military operations have sufficiently progressed, should announce that, before the end of a period of reconstruction, not to exceed six years, a constitution establishing full self-government will be submitted to a representative assembly,

elected on a broad franchise, and will then be implemented by Parliament, subject to the conclusion of a treaty reserving certain imperial rights. Meanwhile a civil administration is to be introduced as soon as practicable after military re-occupation and is to consist of a Governor responsible to the Imperial Parliament with a Council of representative Burmans, nominated by the Governor, to assist him in working the constitution and to prepare the ground for the representative assembly to which the constitution is to be submitted. The treaty will embody the reservations in respect to defense and British (and Indian) enterprise indicated above. The Report further suggests that, during the period of reconstruction, the Under-Secretary for Burma shall move from the India Office to the Dominions Office.

The proposal to transfer Burma to the Dominions Office is welcome evidence that the Committee has not wholly disregarded the psychological aspect of the problem of reconstruction. It is not improbable that a different atmosphere would in course of time imbue the administration with a different spirit. But the belief that "public opinion in Burma would be quick to sense an acceleration of the march towards self-government" is pathetically optimistic. It would help to strengthen the faith of those who wish to believe that Great Britain aims at making Burma capable of independence, but it would have little or no effect on those who mistrust Great Britain's intentions, and it would have no effect whatever on the general body of the people, who do not even know that there is such a thing as a Dominions Office. The situation in Burma that we have described above arose because the government has always been unwilling and too weak to resist the pressure of Western enterprise, and it has been too weak because it has been unable to command the active consent of the people. To repair the damage would in any case necessitate a strong government. Reconstruction would in any case necessitate a strong government. To combine repair and reconstruction the government must be more than doubly strong. No British Governor will be strong enough. As the Committee remarks, "every effort should be made to carry the goodwill of Burmans" and for that it is necessary to appoint a Burman as Governor. For this there is strong precedent in the appointment of Sir J. A. Maung Gyi. The Government will be strong in proportion as the people accept him as their representative, and the man to be appointed should therefore be one who can command most support among the people. This would go far to capture the imagination of the people and to gain the confidence of their leaders. During the early days of reconstruction, and for some years later, he would be unable to maintain himself without British support; he would in fact be unable to do so until the country should be capable of independence. The people need help but do not know it; a Burman Governor would recognize his need of British help, and would welcome the appointment of a High Commissioner to give him the necessary assistance and advice. That is very much the policy adopted by the Japanese and it is not only lawful but common sense to learn from one's enemies. Such a

combination would be much stronger not only to promote the national welfare of Burma but to protect the interests of British enterprise than a European Governor. The first condition of successful reconstruction is then the appointment of a Burman Governor, with a British High Commissioner to help him. The Burman Governor, no less than a British Governor, would of necessity be responsible to Parliament (acting possibly as agent of some Regional Council) because the government can not in fact (whatever the form) be made responsible to the people of Burma until a sufficient proportion, an effective majority, recognize the conditions of independence in the modern world.

According to the Blue Print one function of the Governor is to supervise reconstruction. For this it will need "to carry the goodwill of Burmans." A British Governor would be tempted to aim at appeasement rather than goodwill. This is expressly advocated in the Blue Print by "the early import of consumer goods formerly enjoyed." If, for example, the government aims at a "balanced economy" it must encourage the local production of cotton goods, salt, salt fish, fish paste and so on. The people must accept restrictions. Appeasement might exercise a tranquillising influence, and make the people less zealous for independence; that is not the way to make Burma as soon as possible capable of independence. Also the encouragement of foreign imports will be good for British, Indian and Chinese trade, and for the banks that finance the trade. There is both on grounds of apparent political and economic interest a temptation to pursue a policy of appeasement. A Burman Governor would (or should) be stronger to resist the temptation towards appeasement, and to recommend to the people the necessity for self-discipline in the interest of national advancement.

The Government will probably wish to introduce various measures in the name of welfare, and tend to multiply legislation, staff and expenditure for that purpose. Some, if not many, of these measures will be mistaken and, so far as effective, do more harm than good; for example, the employment of chettyars as clerks in the Land Bank; the expropriation of Burman landowners. Most of them will be unwelcome; for example, the regulation of the monastic order, compulsory primary instruction, sanitary regulations on Western lines, measures for the prevention of disease among men, crops and cattle. Because the people do not regard the measures as conducive to their welfare, a large staff will be needed to enforce them, and the result, as in the past, will be to multiply expenditure and corruption with little or no good effect. Welfare activities will provide employment for more Europeans, and for more Burmans but, ordinarily, at the expense of welfare. Some measures, e.g. vaccination, are necessary. It will be necessary to enforce such measures whether welcome or unwelcome. But activities undertaken in the name of welfare which the people in general do not regard as conducive to their welfare should be kept down to the unavoidable minimum. A Burman Governor

will be better able than a British Governor to reconcile the people to necessary welfare measures and to induce them to accept desirable welfare measures. In either case the government will have to remember that it is easy to spend money, especially other people's money, but difficult to spend it wisely; that measures repugnant to the people can only be effectively enforced under a government responsible to the people; and that welfare legislation beyond what is strictly necessary or generally approved will not only promote disaffection, but will increase the cost, enhance the difficulty, and delay the advent of popular self-government. Every effort should be made to keep the administration as simple as possible and within the limits that such a country as Burma can afford.

The Governor is to introduce a constitution providing full self-government, apparently on democratic principles, within six years. Would any European firm in Burma undertake within six years to make over the whole direction and management of its affairs to Burmans? Would any large firm return to Burma on such conditions? Is it easier to run a single business or a country? Can any one suggest that a people which now has no experience or knowledge of Western industry or commerce can within six years obtain sufficient understanding of them to control industrial and commercial affairs? But that is what full self-government on democratic principles implies. Only two explanations of the suggestion seem possible. One is the cynical interpretation that the form of the government is of no importance, because in any case big business will buy it up. The other, more probable, is that the Committee did not dare to face a decision on the matter of self-government, hoping that "something might turn up," or, possibly, that it would fall to a Labor Government to give effect to the recommendation. It is true that the form of government is of no importance unless a people is capable of independence, and then it can, and will, determine its own form of government. What is possible in six years time is that a Burman, accepted by the people as their representative, will be able with the assistance and advice of a High Commissioner, or Resident or (as formerly in Egypt) an Agent to run the affairs of the country, including both the protection and control of big business, and gradually to extend the circle of responsibility. But that is possible *now*, without waiting for six years. It is almost certainly easier now than after six years during which big business will have been reconsolidating its position in the name of "rehabilitation." Progress towards popular self-government might not be wholly welcome to a Burman Governor, but the British element in the dual government would then have the congenial, liberal, task of pressing forwards towards democracy, instead of, as under a British Governor, appearing fearful to go fast enough.

At or before the end of six years the Governor is to introduce a constitution embodying full self-government. This is to be laid before a representative assembly, and then implemented by Parliament. What is to happen if the representative assembly does not accept the draft? Is the Parliament to

accept blindfold any constitution that the representative assembly approves? These are matters on which the Report is silent. A constitution laid before the assembly by a Burman governor is more likely to be accepted than one devised by a British Governor. In either case what is to prevent a self-governing country from changing its constitution? It would seem that full self-government implies merely that Burma shall have full power to do what it wants on condition that it wants to do what Great Britain wants. This reservation is to be embodied in a treaty. One would imagine that this treaty should form part of the constitution, but the Report appears to indicate the contrary. In that case Burma would be signing a blank check. But how far would any treaty provide safeguards for British interests?

The treaty is to embody conditions with regard to defense and certain economic interests. How is it to be enforced in the event of infraction, by military force or by law? Looked at from this standpoint the reservations in respect of defense are ominous. "How oft the means to do illdeeds make illdeeds done!" Doubtless there would be ample legal pretext for resorting to armed force, and it would be possible to distinguish between intervention in Burma and intervention by Mussolini in Abyssinia. But the distinction might be less obvious to the outside world, and would probably be quite invisible to Burmans. In any case, if Great Britain enforces the treaty by force of arms, the position returns to direct rule by a foreign power, and we have got no further than we are now. If alleged infractions of the treaty are to be settled by law or arbitration, would Burmans be content with a British court, and would Great Britain accept international arbitration? Given that a decision by international arbitration goes against the Burman government, there are innumerable ways within the law of making the position of foreign firms impossible. The only security for British influence in Burma is that it can do much more than any other power to help Burmans, and the condition of security is that a government accepted by the people of Burma as representing them, welcomes British assistance. Create such a government, and the urgency for introducing democratic forms of government within six years or any other fixed period disappears. But the constitution of a government under a British governor with the assistance and advice of representative Burmans will not fulfill the necessary conditions.

The Governor is to be assisted by representative Burmans. Who are these representative Burmans to be? If they are to be officials, dependent on the Governor for promotion and distinction, their advice is more likely to be palatable than useful. Apart from these there are few, if any, except those who are prominent in the present Government of Burma, and it would seem necessary to obtain help from them. In this connection it appears relevant to cite Article 6 of the Treaty of Yandabo, concluded at the end of the first Burmese War in 1826: "No person who has gone from one side to the other during the war, whether a Burmese subject who has joined the English, or an English subject who has joined the Burmese, whether voluntarily or by

compulsion, shall be punished or molested on that account." (The quotation is from the Burmese version, the English version is to the same effect, but less explicit.) This is a precedent for a complete amnesty.

This matter bears not only on the future of Burma but on the immediate conduct of the war. The immediate object is to defeat the Japanese, and to assist the Chinese. If the present Government of Burma can be detached from the Japanese we shall, at least, to some extent, increase their difficulties. According to the Report of the Committee "the Japanese have exploited with no little skill the prevailing militant nationalism," one measure being the recognition of the "independence of Burma." That is a game at which two can play, and one that, with British experience of colonial rule she should be able to play better than the Japanese. She should accordingly undertake now to recognize the present Government of Burma on condition that as far and as soon as possible it helps her against the Japanese, and promise a complete amnesty for all except "war criminals." Retention of office by the present incumbents would be subject to confirmation by a national assembly as soon as it shall be possible to hold one. This may seem magnanimous. But if Britain can avoid unnecessary expenditure of life and money, promote the welfare of Burma and tie it to her by links of interest and affection, magnanimity is merely common sense. A contrary view is that Britain should shoot or hang Ba Maw and his chief assistants. But if Ba Maw is to be remembered as the man who gave back to the Burmans the land which they had lost under British rule, he will be a much greater danger dead than alive, and on the other hand he might (so far and so long as he can be accepted as the best representative of Burman aspirations) and with suitable handling should be, much more useful alive than dead. In respect of individuals as of the government as a whole, magnanimity is common sense.

To sum up: the political recommendations in the Blue Print betray inadequate knowledge of the facts of Burma, of the feelings of Burmans and of the conditions of tropical administration and lack the sympathetic imagination necessary to proposals that will carry Burman goodwill. The minimum condition of successful reconstruction is the appointment of a Burman Governor, so far as possible, representing the people, and the wise and prudent course is to recognize the present government.

London, March 1945

Note

- 1 "*Blue Print for Burma*", Report by Certain Conservative Members of Parliament on the future of Burma, published by the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, London 1944, 18 pp.

TWILIGHT IN BURMA: RECONQUEST AND AFTER

J. S. Furnivall

Source: *Pacific Affairs* 22(1) (1949): 3-20.

Burma in 1945

There is no iron curtain in the Tropical Far East. No curtain is needed, for the scene is sufficiently obscured by the smoke of civil strife: Annamese against the French, Indonesians against the Dutch, a communist rising in Malaya; and in Burma also, despite, or, as some would say, because of the withdrawal of British rule, there is no less confusion. Only in Siam is there precarious peace. What does it all mean? Even here in Burma it is difficult to pierce the twilight. Is it the shade of nightfall or the hour before the dawn? What is happening, and what is going to happen? What, if anything, is one to do about it? As these lines are written, Burmans are celebrating the end of Buddhist Lent with lanterns and Chinese crackers; they seem cheerful enough. Need one do anything? And not many miles out of Rangoon, insurgents have just cut off the water supply, and we are dependent on an older reservoir that before the war was thought insufficient for a smaller population. Must something be done? Will the world outside Burma be content to forego indefinitely the rice and oil and timber that Burma formerly supplied? Surely someone should be able to do something. But no one can do much good without a knowledge of the facts, and it may be useful therefore to try and penetrate the smoke screen obscuring them.

It was early in May 1945 that the British reoccupied Rangoon. There was a vast difference between the land to which they returned and that from which they had been driven three years earlier. Then it had been rich in things that measure the material wealth of nations: rice land yielding an abundant harvest to feed the starving myriads of India; a flourishing timber industry based on extensive teak forests; oil fields, mines and plantations giving a fat return to the fortunate shareholders, with a margin for new capital

equipment foreshadowing still larger profits. All this was wholly the product of about a hundred years of British rule, based on law and individual freedom: freedom for everyone to make money within the limit of laws intended to protect the liberties of property and person. Not without reason those connected with the development of Burma under British rule could look on their handiwork with honest pride.

Now, after little more than three years, they came back to find their work in ruins. During those three years the country had been twice invaded; British and Japanese armies had fought stubbornly throughout the length and breadth of Burma, and each in turn had scorched the earth to cover its retreat. The mines, oil fields and plantations had been deliberately wrecked, and the management and technicians, wholly foreign, and most of the labour, very largely foreign, had fled to India. Agriculture had been unprofitable and rice, of which formerly more than three million tons had been exported annually, was worth so little that it was fed to pigs. Many cattle had been killed, and over large tracts the land had relapsed into scrub jungle, or the soil had been rendered infertile through the salt deposited by tidal waters, forcing their way through embankments which it was no longer profitable to maintain. The productive capacity of the country had fallen by about two-thirds. As stated in a White Paper, presented to the British Parliament in May, there was "a most formidable task to be faced in the re-establishment of stable conditions, the restoration of buildings, communications and other public utilities, and in the rehabilitation of agriculture and other essential industries, the life-blood of the country". The moral damage was even more lamentable than the material damage. For three years the youth of Burma, which should have been learning in the towns and villages how to live as citizens, had served apprenticeship to the more exciting and less laborious art of guerrilla warfare, without even the benefit of military discipline. Burma, said the White Paper, "had suffered grave damage not only in the form of material destruction, but in a shattering of the foundation of her economic and social life".

On this last point, however, Burmans might justly have joined issue. It was true enough that the war had shattered the foundations of the prewar economic structure; but were economic relations really "the life-blood of the country"? They were the lubricant of the imposing economic mechanism on which administrators and men of business looked so proudly. But the life-blood of human society is a more generous stream than the thin lymph which oils the wheels of business. The Burma which they looked back on was not a human society but a business concern. It had been built up on two fundamental principles of economic science: the law of substitution or the survival of the cheapest, and the law actuating economic man, the desire for gain. It is common sense that a man should give twopence rather than threepence for the same thing, and human nature that he should try to get threepence rather than twopence. These principles had governed *economic*

relations long before they were enunciated by Malthus and Ricardo. But they had never governed social relations. In Burma under its own rulers they had been hedged in by custom to the prejudice of economic progress. In England, by the time of Malthus and Ricardo, men had discovered how to give them greater scope without prejudice to social welfare. But in Burma under British rule they had been released from all constraint.

In a land where economic forces are allowed free play, society is broken up into a mass of separate individuals; all moral and cultural values are sacrificed to material progress and then, with life reduced to its lowest terms, further competition results in the material impoverishment of all who cannot secure for themselves some position of advantage; the weakest goes to the wall. In Burma the Burmans were in the unfortunate position of the weakest. In the economic sphere they found no opening except in agriculture; even as cultivators they were in debt to foreign moneylenders, and much of the land had passed into foreign hands. Over large areas of the richest land, the peasantry had been reduced to a landless proletariat working for wages, and the wages of agricultural labour were continually falling. Similarly economic forces had debarred Burmans from all other forms of economic enterprise. Practically all of the overseas trade was conducted by foreigners; and not only overseas trade but also the internal trade between town and village in imported foreign goods. The communications by rail and river were foreign enterprises. And the mines, oil fields and plantations belonged to foreign shareholders who had, and could have, no interest in Burma except as a source of dividends; and they were under foreign management, employing foreign technicians and mostly foreign labour.

The same anti-social economic forces debarred Burmans from the professions of medicine and engineering, even in government service. It was cheaper and less trouble to employ foreigners than to train Burmans. In the routine of general administration Burmans were indispensable, and here many found a subordinate place as clerks, magistrates and judges. To provide these subordinates, the government, with missionary help, established schools and a university. Burma had a tradition of education and, when the British first arrived in 1826, the proportion of men who could read and write was probably higher in Burma than in England. But the development of the country required a new educational system, purely utilitarian, training men for the employment market. As there was no employment for Burmans as engineers and doctors, the scientific branches of education were neglected. In 1936-37, according to the last prewar quinquennial report on education, only seven Burmans obtained a degree in natural science, four others in medicine and two in engineering. Similarly, as there was no opening for Burmans in industry and commerce, the study of economics was neglected. The new educational system did practically nothing to give Burmans an insight into the working of the modern world. From about 1920, on an average some half-dozen men were sent annually to England for various

special studies, but most of them were absorbed into government service. Without any special training men could become journalists or professional politicians, but otherwise the legal profession was the only career in private life with opportunities for Burmans, and there was a handful of men who had been called to the bar in England. But, apart from officials and lawyers, there were probably not more than a couple of dozen Burmans, if so many, who knew anything of the world outside Burma.

And if Burmans knew little of the outer world, they knew perhaps even less of modern Burma. The impact of the West had raised a host of intricate social and economic problems; in Europe these would have been topics of vehement and critical discussion in numerous societies, institutes and periodicals, but there was nothing of the kind in Burma. Except for school textbooks there were practically no books even in English, and nothing in Burmese. In the pseudo-democratic organs that represented a concession to the wave of democratic sentiment which swept the world after the war of 1914-18, the people were allowed to criticize the Government, but they had no material for informed criticism.

Thus the educational system, like the administrative system and the law itself, was merely an instrument of economic law. Prewar Burma was an economic system in which Europeans of many lands, Indians of *divers* creeds and castes, Chinese of different clans and dialects had nothing in common with Burmans except the desire for gain, and recognized no high common principle. It was a typical example of what is now often termed a Plural Society, a society which is dominated by economic forces and can be held together only by foreign troops. As a temple of Mammon it was magnificent, but it was a mausoleum from which the spirit of man had fled. Its rulers, looking from Olympian heights on the brave new world of their creation, saw that it was good; Burmans, looking more closely, saw that it was not good enough. At the first shock of invasion the pretentious edifice, built on insecure foundations, tumbled; the foundations of economic life were shattered, but not the foundations of social life, for there had been no social life. Now the whole structure was in ruins, and the question was whether to rebuild it or to build something more solid in its place.

The immediate task was obvious. There was an urgent need to restore the productive capacity of the country, reduced by the war to about one-third of its former level. Sound economic policy required the increase of production, especially home production, so as to reduce the need for imports which it could no longer afford, and the restriction of consumption so as to cut down imports that were not essential to the increase of production. As in other war-stricken countries, salvation lay in hard work and austerity. With these, eked out by judicious borrowing and care over the national finances, the position was not desperate. But there was one fundamental condition of success: the cooperation of all sections of the community.

Cooperation demanded of necessity a common policy aiming at a common goal. But there was a choice of goals and therefore a choice of policies. There was a choice between Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism. These terms are variously and loosely used and should therefore be defined. Capital is merely disembodied economic energy, and Capitalism is a form of human association dominated by economic forces or in which such forces are, at lowest, predominant. It is often associated with Imperialism, the forcible subjection of one people by another. Socialism is a doctrine formulated in the reaction against Capitalism, and maintaining that economic forces must be kept under control in the interest of social welfare. It is often associated with Nationalism, on the ground that economic forces can be kept under control only by a national unit as the ordered and organized expression of a common social will. Communism is an alternative to Socialism and is less a rational doctrine than a religion, preaching the violent abolition of the existing social and economic order as an essential and inevitable prelude towards establishing the brotherhood of man. Malthus and Ricardo enunciated the principle of population, the iron law of wages, and the law of rent as the foundations of capitalist society. Marx demonstrated that these laws are the expression of anti-social forces which, unless kept under control, lead surely to social revolution. Capitalism in Burma, stronger perhaps than in most other tropical dependencies and certainly far stronger than in the West, had broken down society into a mass of individuals. Now it had collapsed and the ground was clear for Communism, the mass individualism of Marx. The restoration of Capitalism was the goal of foreign enterprise; Burmans, fearful of both Capitalism and Communism, looked to Nationalism for salvation. But Communism had a strategical advantage over Capitalism and Nationalism, for whereas these demanded cooperation between interests superficially opposed, Communism would thrive on discord. If Capitalism and Nationalism could not come to terms, the victory would rest with Communism.

The collapse of empire, 1945-46

The British Government, when driven out of Burma, took refuge in Simla, and throughout the war Simla and Whitehall proliferated plans for the reconquest of Burma, euphemistically described as "reconstruction". Most of the refugees, looking fondly backwards on their golden past, depicted it in their imagination as a golden age for Burmans also, and believed quite sincerely that, if any Burmans were ungrateful, it was because they did not know what was good for them, or had been led astray by foolish politicians deceived by the wily Japanese. The attitude of the Simla Government may be gauged from its official Handbook. The Burmese politicians "were willing to fish in troubled waters and to obtain arms and money from Japanese sources in the hope that, if Britain became involved in real difficulties, they could

blackmail her into granting complete independence; but with characteristic lack of foresight they failed to perceive that, instead of using the Japanese as an instrument for gaining independence, the Japanese were using them as an instrument for aggression". And, as regards factitious claims for independence, "the great mass of the people looked with cynicism, if not contempt, on the professions of the politicians". Men could not, however, quite forget that, on the most favourable interpretation, there had been no widespread demonstration of regret in Burma at the collapse of British rule. The Simla Government had "learned nothing and forgotten nothing" and, if Burmans did not want it back, it would teach them what was good for them. This was the spirit in which it formulated its policy and laid its plans for reconstructing Burma on capitalist lines. Meanwhile, with little regard for economic realities, it entertained a crowd of refugee officials at the expense of the prospective revenues of Burma—some placing orders in England, also to be debited to the account of Burma, for goods which reconstruction might, or might not, require; some engaging in propaganda to proclaim the benefits of British rule; and others, harmlessly if not very usefully, employed in compiling new editions of prewar departmental manuals. But all of them were really just marking time until Burma should be reconquered.

The policy of the home Government was announced in the White Paper presented to the British Parliament at the time of the reoccupation of Rangoon. The economic situation demanded that all communities should join in concentrating on production and austerity. Capitalist interest required a docile administration that would assist foreign enterprise, even to the detriment of cooperation and austerity. This was the substance of the policy announced in Parliament. In the first instance the Government was to rule alone, directly and solely accountable to Whitehall, but an early opportunity would be taken "to establish an Executive Council which, though it might at the outset be a small and mainly official body, could be expanded as opportunity offers by the inclusion in it of non-official Burmese". It admitted that reconstruction would "require the energetic cooperation of all sections of the Burmese people", but there was to be no nonsense about control. And there was to be no cooperation between the Burmese and the allied frontier peoples who would be "subject to a special regime". The cooperation of all capitalist elements could safely be assumed, but only invincible ignorance could have expected Burmese cooperation in such a policy. The Government, however, even more obstinate than Pharaoh, hardened its heart despite the slaughter of the young in two successive world wars, and set about the execution of its plans. If Burman leaders "with their characteristic lack of foresight" had failed to understand the implications of the policy, they could not misunderstand the measures taken to apply it. Differences arose immediately regarding the composition of the Burma Government, administrative reorganisation, the military establishment and economic reconstruction.

The Churchill Government was soon replaced by a Labour Government, more responsive to Burman aspirations. Accordingly on the reintroduction of civil rule in October, the Governor jumped the first stages of the White Paper and without delay appointed an Executive Council. Under the stress of war all of the political sections and racial groups in Burma had achieved unity in the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPEL), and this organisation urged that the Executive Council should be constituted on the lines of Lord Wavell's plan for India. The Governor, however, appointed two British officials and two Burmans who had fled with him to India and could be regarded as "loyal", and he filled the other posts with people less tainted with "disloyalty" than those who had formed the spearhead of national resistance and had been chiefly instrumental in facilitating the British reoccupation. Before the war it had been easy to divide the nationalist opposition by playing off one leader or group against the others. Naturally the Burman leaders suspected the Governor of aiming to divide their ranks by "playing politics", and their refusal to join the Government on these terms was the first blow struck against capitalist reconquest.

In administrative reorganisation likewise the Government showed little appreciation of the political situation, and even of the economic situation. For three years the administration had been wholly Burmese, and for the last two Burma had been nominally independent. Now all those who had served the Burmese Government were required to clear themselves of suspicions of "disloyalty", and from judges of the High Court downwards were subjected to a humiliating inquisition, sometimes conducted by very reluctant junior officials who had served under them before the war. Room had to be found for all of the men who had been marking time in India, and these were given preference and promotion, sometimes despite even notoriously bad records, at the expense of those who had remained behind. The administration was also flooded with new men, soldiers without administrative experience and ignorant of the language, and ex-employees of private firms who might have been more usefully taking part in economic reconstruction. Many of these drew higher pay as government officials than if they had returned to civil life. It is generally recognized as a defect of colonial administration that the scale of official salaries is pitched far higher than the people can afford, and the extravagance of salaries in Burma as compared with other tropical dependencies had formed the subject of adverse comment in a prewar official report. The Burmese Government had effected a notable and necessary reform by cutting down the salaries of all the higher officials to one-half, or even a third, of the previous extravagant figures. Yet the returned Government not only restored the old rates of pay, but allowed officials who had been serving the Burmese Government to draw back pay at the enhanced rate for the whole period of the war. At the same time everyone who was anyone set about wangling luxury cars at government expense, or rather at the expense of the future revenue of Burma. The concessions were prudent as a political

device to secure docile administrative machinery, and were profitable to manufacturers and the export trade in Britain, but they encouraged inflation and personal extravagance and, in the economic situation of the country, showed a very elastic financial conscience.

This was not the only sign that the Government failed to appreciate its financial responsibilities. Land revenue has always been a cornerstone of Burmese finance. It is collected at rates which are fixed for a period of years. During the war the rates in many districts had fallen due for revision, and obviously special arrangements were needed for a general readjustment of the rates to postwar prices, as the maintenance of the former rates involved a substantial loss of revenue while at the same time encouraging the people to indulge in unnecessary expenditure. But nothing of the kind was attempted. The war was treated as a casual break in the normal administrative routine, and revision operations were confined to the two districts where they had been interrupted by the Japanese invasion. It would be charitable to ascribe the sacrifice of revenue to administrative incompetence, for it seems to have reflected the general character of postwar administration. "Most serious of all," wrote an observer in a missionary periodical, "is the mental outlook . . . The reluctance of Government officials to throw their effort into long term constructive planning because very soon Burma will probably not need their services does not reflect credit on British rule." If Burmans would not cooperate in British policy, then British officials would not cooperate with Burmans. But such an attitude could hardly encourage Burmans to retain their services.

The military establishment was another bone of contention. Before the separation of Burma from India in 1937, Burmans were debarred from military service, and at the outbreak of war with Germany there were less than 500 Burmans in the army. During the war the Burmese Government recruited a very considerable military force. The Burman leaders urged that the nationalist forces, regular and irregular, should be taken over and reconstituted as troops, police and a rehabilitation brigade. There was plenty of work to do which could be done only by organized effort, and economy required that all hands should be set to work. The men might profitably have been employed as pioneers in repairing the ravages of war until a place could be found for them in normal civil life. But even a rehabilitation brigade might have embarrassed a Government more concerned to weaken any resistance to capitalist reconstruction than to save money. Reluctantly it agreed to consider individual offers of service in its army and then, under Burman pressure, to accept regimental units, but only on a small scale and with elaborate precautions. One precaution was to insist that only men with a knowledge of English should retain their rank as officers. This rule excluded many of the best officers of the Burmese army, men who had risen from the ranks in time of war merely by a natural aptitude for military command. The effect was to provide officers for any force opposed to the Government, while the

unemployed ex-soldiers provided these potential officers with the material for an army. For the illusion of immediate security the Government was sowing a crop of trouble, not only for itself but for any future Government.

Economic reconstruction was inspired by the same ideas as administrative reorganisation. In Simla the Government had been busy with plans intended to increase production. It decided to leave mineral production to private enterprise, but for oil, timber and agriculture it drew up "Projects" that would facilitate "a return to the normalities of competitive business as soon as possible". Private enterprise in mineral production was cautious rather than cooperative. The Oil Project "consisted of a combination of power companies, including even the Standard Oil Company of New York, which had been an importer, chiefly of lubricating oil and kerosine, but had owned no production or refining facilities in Burma". Here again production was delayed by the uncertainty of future profits. The Timber Projects Board succeeded in restoring half the milling capacity of the teak industry within eighteen months, but, as most of the output was absorbed by the local demand, there was little surplus for export. These Projects Boards were keenly criticized by Burmans as a device for rehabilitating foreign enterprise while relieving it of the expense and risks of reconstruction, but they could be defended on the ground that before the war the British alone had been interested in the industries concerned. That, however, was certainly not the case in agriculture. Yet the Agricultural Projects Board, as originally constituted, included no Burmans, and the members were the leading exponents of methods, characteristic of "the normalities of competitive business", against which Burmans had long and ineffectively protested. It was concerned with trade rather than with production.

Thus even in agriculture, despite the plans drawn up at Simla, little was done to stimulate production. The army on its first arrival issued a pamphlet which led cultivators to believe that they would be left in occupation of the lands on which they had entered in the absence of the Indian landlords. But the Civil Government before leaving Simla published an Act which annulled the pamphlet by replacing the Indian and other absentee landowners in possession of their lands. It would be difficult to suggest any measure more certain to raise the whole country against British rule, and the misunderstanding about the military pamphlet intensified the ill feeling engendered by the enforcement, or attempted enforcement, of the Act. Its immediate effect was to embarrass any future Government attempting to solve the long-outstanding problem of agrarian distress and, by inflaming class and racial feeling, to provide recruits for Communism. One main obstacle to agricultural recovery was the shortage of cattle. This had been foreseen from the time that war reached Burma, and suitable provision might have been made by buying and breeding cattle in India. But nothing had been done. Orders to the value of many million pounds had been placed in England for the machinery required in capitalist reconstruction, and for consumption goods

that would tempt impoverished cultivators to waste their exiguous resources, but nothing was done to supply the cattle they needed for resuming cultivation. Much of the land that had relapsed into jungle could be reclaimed only by the organisation of labour on a large scale, but the Government, rejecting the Burman suggestion that ex-soldiers might be usefully employed in this way, just did nothing. Some of the derelict land, however, could be brought under cultivation by individual peasants, and the most potent inducement would have been a good price for paddy. But whereas the price of most commodities needed by cultivators was about four times the prewar level—and of the universally essential cooking-oil about twenty times—the price of paddy was fixed at only fifty per cent above the prewar rate, and the peasants could buy nothing without borrowing. By the Japanese invasion the cultivators had regained possession of their land and were released from the burden of indebtedness. The newly returned British Government took away the land and forged new chains of debt.

At the same time, as if deliberately intent on alienating all classes, the Government demonetized the Japanese currency. This ruined everyone, including the Burmans who had previously financed cultivation, so that their former clients could satisfy their requirements only by obtaining goods at high prices and at exorbitant interest from the village shopkeeper, usually Chinese. Practically the only remaining source of credit was the Government, which granted agricultural advances on an unprecedented scale. This probably did more harm than good. One feature of prewar Burma, frequently deplored, had been the decay of native industry. During the war it had not only revived but had branched out in new directions. Now there was a chance to help it. But the Government hoped that "an early import of the consumer goods formerly enjoyed would exercise a tranquillising influence" on minds inflamed by "the heady wine of independence". Instead, therefore, of encouraging home weaving and of stimulating cultivation by a good price for paddy, the Government preferred to distribute a bounty per acre on the area newly brought under cultivation, but paid it as far as possible in imported clothing, to the benefit of British manufacturers and the large import firms. During 1947 bankrupt Burma headed the list of customers for British textiles. It was flooded also, among less immediately urgent requirements, with fountain pens. If the cultivator could not buy cattle, he was willing to buy clothes, or even a fountain pen. By issuing loans freely, and it would seem indiscriminately, the Government hoped to exercise a "tranquillising influence", regardless of the consequences when the loans fell due for payment. In Upper Burma the district least in need of loans received the largest sum, and in the next year the Government, instead of attempting to collect outstanding, granted loans on an even larger scale. It is difficult to understand how senior British officials, trained in the tradition of sound revenue administration, could have been so reckless. One need not assume that they were deliberately creating difficulties for their successors, but there

is certainly little sign that they were excessively perturbed by the prospect of leaving others to clear up the mess.

For by the time that the first year's loans fell due, it was already certain that the attempt to reconquer Burma for Capitalism would fail. When the war ended, the situation demanded general cooperation in a programme for the achievement of national welfare through hard work and austerity. The White Paper opened up a distant prospect of self-government within the Empire after reconstruction by British capital under British rule, and offers of cooperation which did not fit in with this plan were repulsed. Thus upwards of two million acres of former rice-land remained unreclaimed, while the disbanded soldiers who might have been employed on reclamation could find no other occupation but dacoity (armed robbery). Racial and class differences were exacerbated, and European capitalists, disillusioned and discouraged, were increasingly reluctant to risk their capital. Apart from such land as peasant farmers working individually could reclaim, there was little increase in production. On the other hand the administrative machinery, with a swollen establishment on high pay, was much more costly than before. Officials could afford to set an example of lavish personal expenditure, and the import policy encouraged the mass of the people to emulate them. In place of austerity there was extravagance, administrative and personal.

Under the policy of capitalist reconstruction the economic situation went from bad to worse. This could not last, and it was cut short by strikes in the factories, the railway, the postal service, in government offices and in the police, until the Burma Government, which had rejected nationalism as a constructive force, was compelled to bow before it as an instrument of destruction. In England the Labour Government, traditionally sympathetic with nationalist aspirations, could no longer be persuaded that all this was the work of a few selfish politicians regarded by the people with cynicism if not contempt. It recognized the need for a fresh start, and appointed a new Governor, Sir Hubert Rance, a soldier who had learned to appreciate the character and qualities of the outstanding Burmese leader, Aung San, and who promptly invited his cooperation in rebuilding Burma as a nation. In the struggle to mould the future destiny of Burma, Capitalism had lost the first round, if it was not yet finally defeated. The next round would decide whether Burma could steer a safe course between Capitalism and Communism as a free nation within the British Commonwealth.

The crisis, 1946-47

Aung San represented the third stage in the evolution of modern nationalism in Burma. The British Government had never succeeded in capturing the imagination of the people; it rested on their acquiescence in overwhelming force but never on consent, and national sentiment had survived a hundred

years of foreign rule. Modern nationalism, however, dates only from 1905, when the victory of Japan over Russia inspired the youth of Burma with the hope of regaining national independence through education. In 1923 the creation of quasi-democratic institutions in Burma encouraged a second generation of reformers to place more confidence in political machinery. Western education and democratic forms both proved ineffective without force to back them, and the leaders of this second generation, notably Ba Maw and U Saw, began to look towards Japan. But a still younger group, though also looking to Japan for help, was turning to Marx for doctrine. The prophet of this new school was Thakin So, a man of little education but fanatic zeal, and his most prominent disciple was Than Htun, perhaps the most able of the younger Burmans but embittered by narrow circumstances that prevented him from completing his studies at the University. Others attracted by his teaching were Aung San, Thakin Mya and Thakin Nu. But they could not reconcile Marxian materialism with Buddhism and, rejecting the Communist doctrine of the inevitability of violence, preferred to call themselves Socialists, while the Communist leaders were Thakin So, Than Htun and another of this group, Thein Pe. The first to reach a wider public was Thakin Mya, rather older than the others, who came to the front by his successful organisation of the Peasants' and Workers' Union in 1939. In the round-up of political opponents before the war, all these were interned except Aung San, who escaped to Japan for military training.

During the war they were all closely associated with Ba Maw, the head of the Burmese administration. Aung San created a Burmese army; Thakin Mya consolidated his influence over the peasants; Than Htun maintained communications with Thein Pe in India; Thakin So pressed for unconditional cooperation with the Allies; and Thakin Nu was the main link between Ba Maw and the other members of the group. Their watchword was national unity as the key to the emancipation of Burma from both Japan and Britain, and in August 1944 Aung San achieved the unification of all parties and groups in the AFPFL, with Than Htun as Secretary. One factor of importance was that Aung San and Than Htun had married sisters, two Burmese Christians, and had thereby acquired much influence among the Karens, who are very largely Christians. Thus, when the British Government returned, Burmans could face it with a common national front enjoying the confidence of the great mass of the agricultural population under the socialist leader Thakin Mya and the support of a national army under Aung San. It was on this rock that the project of capitalist reconquest foundered.

If the Government in 1923, when introducing the forms of democratic rule, had adopted a nationalist policy, it would have been supported by the Burmese people and a Burman army in resisting the Japanese. If, when first driven out of Burma, it had anticipated the Japanese in promising independence, the end of the war would have found in Burma a Government which would have welcomed British support. Even at the end of the war, if it had

tried to promote national reintegration instead of demanding compliance in capitalist reconstruction, there was still a bare chance of harmonious cooperation between capitalist and national interests. Now, after a year, worse than wasted, in which so much had been done to alienate the people and to justify the Communist doctrine of the inevitability of violence, the happy combination of Sir Hubert Rance and Aung San suggested that the situation might not yet be wholly desperate. This was the critical year for Burma.

Aung San, however, was taking no unnecessary risks. The refusal of the Government to use the superfluous nationalist troops on agricultural rehabilitation had presented him with the material for an army. In every village there was a handful of unemployed men with experience of guerrilla warfare, and, scattered about the country, also unemployed, were many of the best officers of the disbanded regiments. Some had joined the Communists, but Aung San gathered most of them into a Home Guard, a national militia, loosely organized in village groups, nominally for protection against dacoits but in fact as an insurance against renewed aggression. After the war of 1885 the British had taken five years to pacify the country, and after the earlier war of 1852, eight years. Then the British had been able to employ Indian troops against an unorganized people with no arms or ammunition. Now, if Aung San gave the signal for a rising, Britain would have to use far more costly European troops to suppress a well-armed national rebellion. Pending the signal, the men were living in comfortable idleness, willingly supplied with food and clothing by the villagers.

Aung San, however, was genuinely anxious for a peaceful settlement, and so also was the Labour Government. He was invited with a few colleagues to discuss matters in London, and set out, as he said, "prepared for the worst, but hoping for the best". In January 1947 the delegation arrived at an agreement with the British Government, announcing as their common objective "a free and independent Burma, whether within or without the British Empire". In England the Government and most people hoped and believed that Burma would choose Dominion Status in preference to Independence, and the declaration met with general approval apart from a few who still saw the East through the romantic spectacles of Kipling or had no eyes for anything except the profit on their investments.

It was ominous, however, that in December, when Aung San agreed to treat with Britain, Than Htun broke with him, and the Communist Party had to be expelled from the AFPFL. Harmony was further marred when U Saw, one of the delegates, refused to sign the Agreement. An unscrupulous and ambitious man, with much ability but little education, he had managed in the corrupt political manoeuvrings of prewar days to gain the confidence of Europeans. It was believed in Burma that he hoped to regain power with European aid by wrecking the Agreement, and that his refusal to sign was the result of an intrigue with the ex-Governor. The move, however, failed to

discredit Aung San, who received an enthusiastic welcome when he returned home proclaiming that the Agreement would "carry Burma to the aspired goal of full independence within a year". When elections for a Constituent Assembly were held in April, no Communist leaders came forward as candidates but they did not formally boycott the proceedings. The result was an overwhelming victory for Aung San and for the AFPFL, which thereupon declared "its firm and solemn reserve to proclaim Burma an Independent Sovereign Republic".

Meanwhile Aung San was being pressed to accept Dominion Status, and doubtless he was beginning to realize more clearly the tremendous difficulty of ruling Burma without British support. Yet the past year had given little reason to believe that capitalist interests and officials of the old regime would work harmoniously with Burma on nationalist lines. They might have to make a few temporary concessions, but they were still unrepentant and saw no reason for repentance; it was prewar Burma that they wished to reconstruct. Those who showed least sign of any change of heart were now the most vociferous in urging the superiority of Dominion Status over Independence. This alone was sufficient to raise among the Burman public suspicions which even Aung San with all his authority could hardly have dispelled; too many Burman leaders had already been tempted by a handful of silver and ribbon into thinking they could use the Government and then had found themselves its tools. If Aung San had decided for Dominion Status, he would have split the AFPFL; some, perhaps most, even of his trusted Home Guard, would have joined the Communists in open insurrection. More and more he would have had to lean on capitalist support, paying of course the necessary price, until he either surrendered to it wholly or made a belated stand after throwing away his arms. The reintegration of Burma required a strong united Government; with Dominion Status the Government, divided by friction and intrigue, would have been even weaker than before the war and less able to promote national welfare, while, in attempting to maintain order with the help of foreign troops, it would have had to support Capitalism against Nationalism in a civil war where the final victory must rest with Communism. Burma needed British help and foreign capital. Most advocates of Dominion Status genuinely believed that this would best serve its needs, but many were looking to the interests of capital rather than of Burma. Not many Burmans recognized the need for British help, and those who did so were most keenly conscious of its dangers. Europeans who pressed on Burma the advantages of Dominion Status with the option of secession would have served British interests better by demanding the exclusion of Burma from the Empire with the option of readmission.

Tragedy relieved Aung San of his responsibility. On July 19, 1947, he was assassinated, together with six others, and at a blow a people that, owing to the circumstances of its past, had so few good men, was robbed of almost all its most solid and influential leaders. Among the victims was Aung Mya,

second only to Aung San in influence and perhaps of riper judgment. The twin pillars of the AFPFL, the Home Guard and the Peasants' Union, were both decapitated. It appeared later that the crime had been engineered by U Saw, hoping apparently that in the confusion the Governor would call on him to save the country. Diehards in England seized the occasion to shout that Burma was not fit for self-government, but, thanks to the cool and quick decision of Sir Hubert Rance and the courage of Thakin Nu in accepting the vacant leadership, the crisis passed without immediate disaster. The Constituent Assembly approved the new Constitution in September; the British Parliament approved the secession of Burma in November; and on January 4, 1948, Burma regained its independence.

NATIONALISM IN BRITISH COLONIAL BURMA

Cecil Hobbs

Source: *Far Eastern Quarterly* 6(2) (1947): 113-21.

Four factors will influence British colonial policy in Burma: (1) public opinion in various countries of the world; (2) liberal thought in England itself; (3) Japan's occupation of Burma; and (4) the growth of nationalism within Burma.

Though all these factors are important, this discussion will be concerned with only the last, namely, Burmese nationalism and its development. Burmese nationalism is of fairly recent origin. After the annexation of Burma by the British in 1886, there was no nationalistic movement revolving about the dethroned Burmese king or the royal family. It was not until after the first World War that the Burmans showed any marked interest in national politics. In 1923, after certain reforms had been introduced, organizations of a nationalist character known as *wunthanu* were formed. The avowed purpose of these groups was to obtain a larger voice in local administration.

In any examination of nationalism in Burma, four factors must be taken into account: (1) the Burmese press, (2) the student element, (3) the *pongyis* or Buddhist monks, and (4) political parties and their leaders.

The Burmese press

Although no vernacular newspaper in Burma has a paid circulation of more than 10,000 copies, the influence of the press—at least in urban centers—should not be underestimated. After the separation of Burma from India in 1937, many new newspapers and magazines appeared, and the total circulation of the press was greatly increased. The Riots Inquiry Commission Report (1939) lists the Burmese press as first of the four main influences which incited the race riots in 1938. The Emergency Press Act was enforced

in Burma as it was in India. The nationalist press asserted that the Burmans' civil liberties had been infringed.

The British have had to undergo some scathing denunciation at the hands of certain Burmese writers whose articles appeared, among others, in the *Saithan*, *New Mandalay sun*, *The new light of Burma* and the *Dagon magazine*. Fully four years before the war, Japanese paid propaganda, bitterly attacking the British and Chinese, appeared frequently in the Burmese vernacular press. The Dagon Press and the *Dagon magazine*, which denounced the British policy on the defense of Burma, had each to forfeit the security deposit of Rs. 500 on the ground that they had published inflammatory articles. *The new light of Burma*, a leading daily in Rangoon which was outspoken on the subject of independence, carried an editorial on October 31, 1940 with these words: "The time has arrived for Britain to make a clear declaration regarding her intention towards India and Burma. We are afraid that if Britain now goes on juggling with words, she will have cause to repent later. Britain is now standing before the bar of international justice."

The student element

The movement towards nationalism has kindled the imagination of Burmese youth, particularly the student element. A prominent nationalist group in the 1920's was a student group organized in protest against mission-operated and other government-aided schools. This movement brought about the so-called "national schools," at first independently organized and supported, but by the 1930's most of these schools had succumbed to the grant-in-aid system of education. In November 1920 the youthful Thakin group founded Burma National Day on which the youth of Burma were to celebrate Burmese freedom and indicate aspiration for greater freedom until Burma might be independent.

A strong student union organized the schools throughout the country to the point where a single order would send all students on strike, including those in secondary and elementary schools. As an organized body they defied the government and looked upon their union as an important unit in the nationalist movement of the country. Strikes and demonstrations were staged in conjunction with the designs of political leaders. In 1936 when the government did not meet the union's demands with reference to the government's educational policy and administration, a nationwide student strike was invoked. The president of the All Burma Students' Union was Ko Ba Sein, a young Thakin, who later held a post in the Japanese Burma government and recently was one of the members in the Burma delegation during the London talks in January 1947. Prior to the war, young men constituted a large percentage of the Dobama asiayone or Thakin party, one of the most militant nationalist parties in Burma. This political group worked hand in hand with the student element at the University.

The East Asia Youth League, an organization set up by the Japanese in all occupied areas, had an active contingent in Burma. It is reported that this voluntary group consisted of 30,000 members with 270 branches throughout the country. The All Burma Students' Union probably provided able leadership for the league. Members of the league were concerned with all civic affairs.

The *pongyis* or Buddhist monks

The participation of the Buddhist clergy in politics is a notable feature in Burma. In 1921-22, when nationalism was in an embryonic stage, the clergy supported the establishment of the "national schools." In 1938 during the anti-Moslem riots, *pongyis* are reported actually to have led the rioters. Within the past twenty years Buddhism has become closely associated with nationalism.

Apart from the organized political parties, the Buddhist *pongyis* comprise the most important organized group in Burma. Although there is no so-called religious political party in Burma, each party has, however, an ecclesiastical caucus in which prominent politicians are influenced by the *pongyis*.

A large number of the young *pongyis* interested in politics are intensely opposed to British rule. They, therefore, actively supported the Japanese invasion. Monks with political interests that exceeded their monastic vows were employed by the Japanese to set up co-operating village units, so that hundreds were trained to be propaganda agents. In the spring of 1943 the Maha Sangha Athin (Supreme Priesthood Association) was formed with the avowed purpose of enlisting a united collaboration of the clergy of all Buddhist sects. On one occasion, U Ba Maw frankly asserted, "*Sanghas* can best serve the State in the field of propaganda. *Sanghas* make very good propagandists as all of us know."¹

Political parties and their leaders

Three factors characterize politics in Burma: the multiplicity of parties, the lack of a uniform program, and the desire for independence. No well-defined two-party system has ever developed in Burma. Parties easily and quickly divide or coalesce, so that frequent changes of ministry are common. Nationalist leaders have been relatively free from violence and terrorist practices, however, and political assassinations have not occurred in recent times.

The three politicians who have been most prominent in modern Burma are U Ba Maw, U Saw, and U Aung San.

U Ba Maw was Premier at the time of the separation of Burma from India in 1937. He was later the Chief of State when Burma gained her "independence" under the Japanese. Being an ardent nationalist, U Ba Maw was bold in his statements. In a public meeting on June 9, 1940 he is reported, by the

Rangoon gazette, to have declared that "it was immaterial whether Britain or Germany won the war, but when peace proposals were to be discussed, Burma's case should also be laid before the conference table along with those of other small countries." He was arrested two and one-half months later under the Defense of Burma Act. It is significant that one month after U Ba Maw's famous speech, Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, announced in Parliament that at the close of the war Burma would be granted "a constitution which will enable her to take *at once* her due place as a fully self-governing and equal member of any Commonwealth or Federation of free nations that may be established as a result of the war."² This statement was confirmed by the Governor of Burma, with the result that a Burman, who was to give special attention to defense problems, was appointed as a special counselor, in return for which Burma pledged to give full co-operation during the war.

The most important succeeding ministry was that of U Saw. Prior to his election U Saw was looked upon as an extreme nationalist who had pro-Japanese leanings. One incident which was evidence of the growing national spirit in Burma, and which caused considerable uneasiness was a resolution passed by the House of Representatives during the U Saw regime stating its "regrets that the British Government have made Burma a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany."³ It was U Saw who went to London in November of 1941 to demand that the third clause of the Atlantic Charter (right of self-determination of nations) be applied to Burma, only to have Prime Minister Churchill state within a few weeks that the Charter did not apply to regions in which the people owe allegiance to the British Crown. U Saw disappeared from public view soon after Pearl Harbor, having been interned by the British for the period of the war. He is now in Burmese politics again and was one of the Burmese delegates to the recent Anglo-Burmese talks in London.

In the fall of 1939 a bitter quarrel developed between Burmese nationalists and Sir Archibald Cochrane who was then Governor. The incident is rather important. In answer to an inquiry about Burma's independence, the Governor stated in no uncertain terms that Britain would continue to develop a responsible government in Burma as an integral part of the Empire, but that London alone would determine the nature and the time of specific measures to be taken. This policy of the British afforded Japan excellent propaganda when she came to deal with the nationalist collaborators in Burma. Opposition to the British was mainly voiced by the militant nationalist political parties—the "Freedom Bloc" founded in early 1939 by U Ba Maw and the Myochit (Patriotic) party of U Saw.

After the British evacuation in 1942, nationalism found expression in a variety of ways: English was abolished as far as possible as the official language in favor of Burmese; a movement was launched to standardize the Burmese language, a measure long overdue; English names of streets,

buildings, and parks in most cities and towns were given Burmese equivalents; statues and memorials to Burmese national heroes were erected; and the British blue ensign mounted with a peacock was replaced by a gold, green, and red flag with the peacock medallion.

When Japan came into Burma, she employed real strategy in offering Burma independence. The declaration had a profound psychological effect. For one thing, the various political parties were fused together on the question of independence. The Japanese promise of independence to Burma was a strategic move to guarantee Burmese co-operation during the war. The Burmese nationalists, however, soon made it clear to the Japanese that their desire for independence was genuine.

The ardent nationalist, U Ba Maw, could not be pushed aside to an unimportant role in the Japanese administration. Through his and other nationalists' efforts the Japanese authorities were forced to adopt a policy of conciliation, and steps were taken towards granting Burma her independence. The proclamation declaring Burma independent was issued on August 1, 1943 with U Ba Maw as the Naingngandaw Adipadi or Chief of State.

Since the war, the popular military and nationalist leader by the name of U Aung San has risen swiftly to a prominent position in Burmese politics. Prior to the war U Aung San was an ardent nationalist. While a student at University College in Rangoon he was a conspicuous leader in the activities of the All Burma Students' Union, being elected its president in 1937. In the next year he joined the Thakin party, the strongest nationalistic political party at that time. In 1939 he became secretary of the Burma Freedom Bloc, a coalition of the Thakin, Sinyetha, and Myochit nationalist parties headed by U Ba Maw. In 1940 U Aung San led the Thakin party's delegation to the All-India Congress at Ramgarh, where he met India's nationalist leaders, Gandhi and Nehru.

Early in the war U Aung San went to Japan in search of support for Burma's freedom. Japanese authorities agreed to aid the freedom movement and to train Burmese youth to lead a Burmese liberation army. U Aung San and twenty-nine others, later referred to as the "Thirty Heroes," were selected for officer training by the Japanese in the country of Siam. U Aung San, at the age of 27, emerged as the leader of the Burma Independence Army. Early in 1943 General Aung San accompanied U Ba Maw as a member of a Burmese mission to Japan when Tojo made his promise of Burmese independence within one year. In the spring of 1943, when U Ba Maw formed the Independence Preparation Committee, U Aung San was appointed Minister of Defense. Within the two years between 1943 and 1945 U Aung San came to realize the Japanese brand of independence which had been granted to Burma was not the kind which Burma wanted. By March of 1945 Burmese forces under the leadership of General Aung San were fighting with the British against the Japanese for the liberation of Burma.

After the war, U Aung San was influential in forming the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League with the stated purpose of achieving complete Burmese independence. As the League President U Aung San became the official spokesman for a prominent nationalist body. Soon after Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith returned to Rangoon as Governor of Burma, U Aung San and other Burmese nationalist leaders expressed their desire for self-government. In the late autumn of 1945 U Aung San and the Governor became engaged in a controversy concerning the membership of the Executive Council and the demands made by the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. At the request of the Governor, U Aung San submitted certain names for a new Executive Council. The list of eleven fervent nationalists was completely rejected. The negotiations between U Aung San and the Governor were broken off, leaving the League with no participating members in the Council. This action on the part of the Governor elevated U Aung San to new popularity in the eyes of the Burmans. U Aung San as head of the League continued to appeal to the Burmans and on various occasions made appeals for support from the governments of foreign countries.

On many occasions U Aung San attacked the British policy in Burma. In *The Burmese review* of May 20, 1946 (p. 10) he is reported to have made the following statement when delivering the Presidential address before the Supreme Council of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League on May 16th:

The main conclusion which we cannot but arrive at is that the Government is following a policy of drift. Why is it then that the Government is pursuing such a policy or lack of policy? Again we find two answers to this question. The first is that the Government must be quite ignorant of what is really happening. That the Government either here or in Britain is misinformed about the situation can be seen in some of their own statements and acts which are brought to our notice from time to time . . . On the other hand, let me advise the British Government in all sincerity that any mistaken pose or attitude of false pride or prestige on their part taken on the strength of unreliable intelligence reports will not cow down the people but may very probably incense them to the very situation which neither the British Government nor we ourselves desire to see . . . If the British Government's intentions towards Burma are sincere, why still have the unpopular unrepresentative, powerless, Executive Council of the Governor? Why so much delay in announcing a general election? . . . Our aspirations are clear and explicit. We want a National Government representing the principal political groups, vested with full powers in all matter, including Defense and External Affairs, before the election for the Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal adult franchise for everyone of eighteen can be held. We want a

National Government because this is the only effective way in which the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Burma can be carried out.

After the resignation of Dorman-Smith, Sir Hubert Rance was appointed Governor of Burma. Within a few weeks U Aung San requested the new Governor to withdraw the Defense of Burma Act. This and other requests of the Burman nationalists were refused. Within one week the Rangoon police went out on strike, and by the latter part of September 1946 strikes were spreading elsewhere. On September 21 Governor Rance met with Burmese political leaders to decide upon the personnel of a new Council. U Aung San was given the portfolios of Defense and External Affairs, while five League members were granted seats on a Council consisting of eleven members in all. This was a victory for U Aung San, and the strikes soon ended in early October.

One of the last demands made by U Aung San was that the British leave Burma by the last day of January 1947. Apparently the matter was referred to London. By the middle of November Prime Minister Attlee announced in London that a Burman delegation would come to London for a conference regarding Burmese independence. The delegation to London was headed by the youthful nationalist, U Aung San, and the talks opened on January 13, 1947.

The conversations between the British Cabinet and the Burmese delegates in London on the future of Burma have produced promising results. The resulting Anglo-Burmese pact contains these significant points: (1) a Constituent Assembly consisting only of Burma nationals will be elected in April of this year; (2) with the elections to the Constituent Assembly completed, the Governor will nominate one hundred members for the Legislative Council including representatives of all minorities; (3) the Interim Government, with about the same authority as the present Interim Government in India, will conduct the affairs of state under the emergency provisions of the Act of 1935 until the new constitution comes into force; (4) certain matters now formally reserved by the Governor of Burma—for example, matters concerning defense and foreign relations—will be brought before the Executive Council which is to be fully associated with the disposition of such matters; (5) arrangements are in the making whereby Burma will be represented abroad; these include the immediate appointment of a Burmese high commissioner in London; (6) whatever action is to be taken with reference to the people of the frontier areas it is to be in accordance with the desires of the people within these areas. Representatives of the frontier peoples—the Karens, Kachins, Chins, Shans, Lahus, and others—are to express their views at a forthcoming conference relative to the form of association they will have with the new government of Burma; (7) Burma will have the power to decide whether or not she prefers to remain within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Burma is not yet independent but she is well on the road to that accomplishment. Imperialism, as practiced prior to the war, is bound to undergo a change. The position of the British in Burma, India, and other parts of the world within a few years will be considerably altered. Those who profit most from the fruits of imperialism will labor to check such a change, but the handwriting on the wall clearly indicates that Burma is to have her independence. U Aung San referred to the agreement as an interim one which the Burmese people have to ratify. He further pointed out that the agreement did not indicate that the British government would have to ratify the decisions of the forthcoming Constituent Assembly.

Even though it is difficult to calculate accurately the impact of nationalism in Burma, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that it is a movement which manifests the fond hope of the Burmese for independence. It is a force which to a marked degree has brought pressure to bear upon the policy of Great Britain in the colony of Burma. One wonders what the turn of historical events would have been in Burma had Britain actually granted independence to Burma in 1940 instead of baiting her until the conclusion of the war.

The results of the recent London talks makes it appear that Britain is ready to fulfill the liberal view as expressed by a certain Englishman who held a number of high positions in the government of Burma:

Reconstruction is impossible without the active cooperation of the people, and that cannot be expected unless there is an appeal to them on the ground of nationalism. Nor will any principle less powerful than nationalism suffice to bring economic forces under social control.⁴ [And on another occasion he said:] Twenty years ago Britain threw away a chance to rebuild society in Burma . . . If she aims merely to reconquer Burma and restore British rule, then however she may dope her conscience with professions of good-will, she will merely be re-establishing the way of those economic forces that have already proved too strong for her to cope with. If, on the other hand, she aims to make Burma capable of independence but tied by interest and affection to the British Commonwealth, she should declare now her willingness to recognize its independence with freedom of secession and express her readiness to treat with any government supported by the people . . . and able to discharge the international obligations of a modern state.⁵

Democracy does stand a good chance of flourishing in the country of Burma if imperialism will give it an unthwarted opportunity. The road will be new and hazardous; the road of freedom and independence usually is.

Notes

- 1 *Burma during the Japanese occupation* (Simla: Government of India Press, 1944), vol. 2, p. 142.
- 2 *Rangoon gazette*, July 8, 1940.
- 3 U Ba Thi war resolution, moved in the Burma House of Representatives on Sept. 2, 1940 as recorded in the *Rangoon gazette weekly budget*, Sept. 2, 1940.
- 4 *Pacific affairs*, 16 (Sept. 1943), 298.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 300.

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FRONTIER AREAS COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY

Anonymous

Source: Report presented to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of Burma, Rangoon: Government Printing and Stationery (1947), pp. 12-17.

British administration of Frontier Areas up to 1942

The strategic importance of the Frontier Areas as a buffer between an inland invader and the valleys of Burma proper prompted the British to extend their administration over these areas piecemeal, as necessity or opportunity arose, in the years following 1886. Local advances continued in the far north as late as 1940, when the head-hunting Naga tribes were first brought under some sort of administration.

From the late 19th Century, until the 1935 Government of Burma Act came into force in 1937, the form of administration in the Frontier Areas, other than the Shan States, did not materially change. They were ruled as part of Burma in the traditional manner by local chieftains under the general supervision and control of the Governor of Burma.

British administration of the Shan States up to 1942 may be divided into four periods. First, in 1888, leading *Sawbwas* were persuaded to accept the simple form of *sanad*, one of the clauses in which required a *Sawbwa* to accept the guidance of the "Superintendent". The actual administration during the period 1886-97, however, was left in the hands of the *Sawbwas*. British advisers were attached to the *Sawbwas* of Hsipaw and Yawnghwe. This was the origin of the system of "Assistant Superintendents" in the Shan States.

The years 1897-1922 were marked by the introduction of local self-government in Burma and in the Lieutenant-Governor's Council a Shan *Sawbwa* was a member throughout this period.

The third period 1922-35 was an experimental one in federation. The federation of Northern and Southern Shan States came into effect on 1st

October 1922 which was a year before the introduction of the dyarchical form of government in Burma. The Federal Council of Shan Chiefs, with a Commissioner as President, was introduced. Through this Council the *Sawbwas* expressed their views on federal and general matters including the federal budget. The Burma Frontier Service came into being with the introduction of federation. Towards the end of this period suggestions were made for the creation of a Peoples' Council.

The fourth period from 1935 to 1942 was marked by a series of reforms as a result of representations by *Sawbwas* to His Majesty's Government. A significant feature was the creation of a small Standing Committee of Council Chiefs composed of six representatives elected by the main Council. This Standing Committee had direct dealings with the Governor periodically. Thus federal subjects came under the general direction of the Council.

Although, however, the system of administration was different, the course of events forged a number of new links between the Frontier peoples and Burma during this period. Many trading centres sprang up in the valleys where Burmese, Indian and Chinese merchants settled and built up a considerable trade with the people of the nearby hills. By 1935 the population of these centres and the surrounding country had become rather more advanced than their neighbours in the hills.

The 1935 Act made allowances for the different stages of development in the different parts of the Scheduled Areas by dividing them into less politically advanced regions, known as Part I Areas, still to be administered by the Governor in his discretion, and the more politically advanced Part II Areas, the administration of which was within the ministerial sphere, though the Governor had a special responsibility over these and could overrule the decision of ministers in respect of these areas. A further division was made in Part II between Constituency Areas which returned members to the Burma Legislature in Rangoon and the Non-Constituency Areas.

It was contemplated that as Part II Areas continued to develop they should in time be completely merged in Burma proper. The same course of development was open to Part I Areas. The Act allowed Part I Areas to become Part II Areas, as they matured, and Part II Areas to be merged in Ministerial Burma, but did not permit the reverse process in either case.

The 1935 Act remained in active operation until the Japanese invasion in 1942 and the process of closer association between Burma and the Frontier Areas continued. The links between the two were not only commercial but also financial. For instance, Health, Education, and various other services, were financed in part by the revenues of Burma, since all the Frontier Areas, with the possible exception of the Federated Shan States, were deficit.* Moreover, Kachins, Chins and Karens had all come to regard service in the Burma Army and Police, both financed by Burma, as an important source of income.

By the time of the Japanese occupation in 1942, the situation was that the Frontier peoples had begun to be accustomed to many amenities of which they had known nothing before 1886, and which they could not afford to maintain out of their own resources. Thus, both political and economic links had been strengthened between them and Burma since the British annexation of 1886.

British re-occupation in 1945

After the British re-occupation in 1945, it soon became apparent that administration under the 1935 Act would not for long satisfy the political aspirations of Burma. Burmese nationalism had greatly increased both in strength and in the urgency of its demands, and a similar, though less marked, development had taken place among the Frontier peoples, who were anxious to take into their own hands as soon as possible many of the powers formerly exercised by the British. It was realized that the time had come when the traditional methods of personal rule must be modified by the development of representative institutions, where they were in existence, and their creation where they were not. A start was made by enhancing the importance of the Village Councils that had, according to customary law, formerly advised the Chiefs in the exercise of their powers, and by fostering the growth of larger District and Domain Councils to which the villages could send representatives. A hierarchy of Councils with powers at first advisory and later executive was in fact envisaged. The process, however, was bound by its very nature to take time, and was, by early 1947, still at a comparatively rudimentary stage. As far as the Shan States were concerned the absorption in 1945 of the duties of the Commissioner, Federated Shan States, in those of the Director, Frontier Areas Administration, with headquarters in Rangoon, and the placing of the Federated Shan States under the charge of two Residents constituted a reversion to the system of administration before 1925, when there was no separate Commissioner for the Shan States. This did away with the central executive within the Federated Shan States and the control over federal departments. The *Sawbwas* therefore formed their own Executive Council including the representatives of the people.

At the same time, the more enlightened leaders of the Frontier peoples realized that they were economically as well as politically less advanced than Burma proper. They depended on Burma to supplement the inadequate local production even of their staple foodstuff, rice, and, outside the Shan States, the sparsity of population and difficulty of communications were serious obstacles to development. They appreciated the fact that in order to achieve a higher standard of living they needed a measure of outside assistance which would have to come from either Britain or Burma, and that, in the conditions of the modern world, they had certain common interests with Burma which precluded a continuance of the pre-war arrangements for

entirely separate administrations. None-the-less, the historical fact that the Frontier peoples had never been interfered with in their internal affairs, was not forgotten, and the desire for large measure of autonomy was almost universal.

Various contacts between Burmans and Frontier political leaders took place during 1945 and 1946, and progress towards mutual understanding was made. In January 1947, when the London Agreement cleared the way for the speedy creation of a new constitution for Burma, the problem of relations between the Frontier Areas and Burma acquired a new urgency. The Agreement moreover gave a clear indication of the most desirable solution to the problem by proclaiming that it was the agreed objective of both His Majesty's Government and the Government of Burma "to achieve early unification of the Frontier Areas and Ministerial Burma with the free consent of the inhabitants of those areas".

In February 1947, leaders and representatives of the majority of the Frontier peoples met members of the Burma Executive Council at Panglong, in pursuance of the terms of paragraph 8 (b) of the London Agreement, and agreed on a form of association during the interim period until the new constitution came into force.

The Panglong agreement

The terms of the Panglong Agreement, which regulated relationships between Burma and the major portion of the Frontier Areas when the Committee of Enquiry began its work, were as follows:—

THE PANGLONG AGREEMENT, 1947.

A conference having been held at Panglong, attended by certain Members of the Executive Council of the Governor of Burma, all *Saohpas* and representatives of the Shan States, the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills:

The Members of the Conference, believing that freedom will be more speedily achieved by the Shans, the Kachins and the Chins by their immediate co-operation with the Interim Burmese Government:

The Members of the Conference have accordingly, and without dissents, agreed as follows:—

1. A representative of the Hill Peoples, selected by the Governor on the recommendation of representatives of the Supreme Council of the United Hill Peoples (S.C.O.U.H.P.), shall be appointed a Counsellor to the Governor to deal with the Frontier Areas.

2. The said Counsellor shall also be appointed a Member of the Governor's Executive Council, without portfolio, and the subject of Frontier Areas brought within the purview of the Executive Council by Constitutional Convention as in the case of Defence and External Affairs. The

Counsellor for Frontier Areas shall be given executive authority by similar means.

3. The said Counsellor shall be assisted by two Deputy Counsellors representing races of which he is not a member. While the two Deputy Counsellors should deal in the first instance with the affairs of their respective areas and the Counsellor with all the remaining parts of the Frontier Areas, they should by Constitutional Convention act on the principle of joint responsibility.

4. While the Counsellor, in his capacity of Member of the Executive Council, will be the only representative of the Frontier Areas on the Council, the Deputy Counsellors shall be entitled to attend meetings of the Council when subjects pertaining to the Frontier Areas are discussed.

5. Though the Governor's Executive Council will be augmented as agreed above, it will not operate in respect of the Frontier Areas in any manner which would deprive any portion of these areas of the autonomy which it now enjoys in internal administration. Full autonomy in internal administration for the Frontier Areas is accepted in principle.

6. Though the question of demarcating and establishing a separate Kachin State within a Unified Burma is one which must be relegated for decision by the Constituent Assembly, it is agreed that such a State is desirable. As a first step towards this end, the Counsellor for Frontier Areas and the Deputy Counsellors shall be consulted in the administration of such areas in the Myitkyina and the Bhamo Districts as are Part II Scheduled Areas under the Government of Burma Act of 1935.

7. Citizens of the Frontier Areas shall enjoy rights and privileges which are regarded as fundamental in democratic countries.

8. The arrangements accepted in this Agreement are without prejudice to the financial autonomy now vested in the Federated Shan States.

9. The arrangements accepted in this Agreement are without prejudice to the financial assistance which the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills are entitled to receive from the revenues of Burma, and the Executive Council will examine with the Frontier Areas Counsellor and Deputy Counsellors the feasibility of adopting for the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills financial arrangements similar to those between Burma and the Federated Shan States.

The importance of the Agreement lies not only in the fact that it settles the form of association during the interim period, but also in its enunciation of certain principles, notably that the Frontier peoples should be entitled to fundamental democratic rights, that they should have the right to full autonomy in the internal sphere, and that they should be entitled to receive a measure of assistance from the revenues of Ministerial Burma which are

relevant to decision of the ultimate form of association. The formation of the Supreme Council of the United Hill Peoples was also a noteworthy step forward in the establishment of representative institutions among the Frontier peoples.

Note

- The Shan States were self-supporting before the War, if the Shan States Federal Fund is taken into account. This fund was created in 1922 and maintained by contributions from the States and from the funds of Burma and by receipts from minerals and forests. From 1937 the contributions from the central revenues of Burma was not a gift to finance a deficit, but a carefully calculated allotment of what was due to the States in consideration of revenue accruing to the Central Government from taxation of commercial activity in their territories (e.g. the entire Petrol Tax accrued in the first place to central revenues, although much petrol was consumed by transport operating in Shan States). The Fund has been in abeyance since 1941, but Articles 8 and 9 of the Panglong Agreement foreshadow its renewal.

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THE NEW NATION OF BURMA

Virginia Thompson

Source: *Far Eastern Survey* 17(7) (1948): 81-4.

Having regulated relations with Great Britain by the treaty of last October and having achieved political independence in January of this year, the leaders of Burma have turned their eyes from London and are focussing more than ever before on the local scene.

The Burmese could hardly have assumed power at a more difficult period. The country was fought over from end to end in two campaigns and there is hardly a town that has not received major damage. Communications, never adequate even in the prewar period, have been badly disrupted; the rail network, in particular, suffered serious losses in equipment, bridging, and personnel, and the inland waterways over which much more of the country's produce was transported lack the requisite shipping facilities.

Economic recovery incomplete

All classes of Burmese were impoverished by Britain's invalidation of Japanese currency after the reoccupation. Agriculture, on which traditionally two-thirds of the population depend for their livelihood and the government for its major revenues, lost its export trade and many of its laborers and draft animals during the war. At the war's end the world's greatest exporter of rice was barely able to feed itself, and now, although paddy cultivation has staged a remarkable comeback, Burma is able to ship to a hungry world not quite half of its prewar surplus of 3,500,000 tons. Teak, of which Burma was also the world's largest exporter, has likewise suffered from loss of markets, depredations, and neglect during the Japanese regime. Exports of this commodity are now only a fraction of prewar averages. The oilfields of Yenangyaung and Chauk and the Syriam refinery, owing to a combination of "denial" measures, bombing, and delays in settling war compensation claims, have not yet resumed production. Although imports have been greatly exceeding exports in the postwar period, consumer goods are still in short supply and

inflation is rampant. Burma has long had the reputation of being the most crime-ridden country in East Asia, and banditry, since the war, has taken on a new lease of life, due to the easy availability of thousands of modern weapons left in the country by the Japanese and Allied guerrilla forces.

So great has been the preoccupation of the Burmese with the independence question and so uncertain has appeared the future to the foreign capitalists who heretofore dominated Burma's economy that little has been done as yet towards reconstruction. The British army did helpful work, particularly in repairing the transport system, but its regime lasted only from May 6 to October 16, 1945. Subsequently its officers became too resentful of what they felt to be a premature return of the civil administration to cooperate effectively in rehabilitating the country. In its turn the civil government tried for a year to run Burma without the cooperation of its premier political party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), and in the face of widespread and sometimes violent opposition to the policy embodied in the White Paper of 1945. When this policy was reversed in September 1946 with the advent of Governor Rance, the AFPFL-dominated Executive Council, formed at that time, gave almost all its energies to winning independence for Burma. This was done in successive steps, of which the London Agreement of January 1947 and the Anglo-Burmese Treaty of October last year were the most important. But this process was accompanied by a serious split within the AFPFL ranks, notably the expulsion of the Burma Communist Party (BCP) and the outlawing of the Communist Party of Burma, as well as by the formation of an opposition bloc of rightist parties—the Myochit, the Dobama Asiayone, and the Sinyetha, led respectively by U Saw, Ba Sein, and Ba Maw, all well-known politicians of prewar days.

Attacks from right and left

Opposition on the part of these rightist leaders was due less to ideological factors than to personal antagonism towards, and jealousy of, Aung San, Burma's national hero of the anti-Japanese resistance days and president of the AFPFL. On the other hand, opposition from the mutually hostile Communist parties stemmed from profound differences in economic thinking and from their conviction that freedom for Burma could not and should not be won by diplomacy but by an armed mass revolution. Rightist opposition culminated in and was totally discredited by its instigation of the assassination last July of Aung San and six of his ministers. This left the field clear for the Socialist-oriented AFPFL, now under the leadership of Thakin Nu, and for the more moderate of the communist parties—the BCP, led by Than Tun and Thein Pe. In the meantime the outlawed Communist Party of Burma, under the doctrinaire Thakin Soe, went deeper underground and its current influence has dwindled to sporadic support of the Arakan separatist movement and to fomenting peasant revolts in some of the central districts.

The parting of the ways between the two less extreme leftist nationalist groups was delineated more than six months before the AFPFL came to power. It was delayed until November 1946 by various factors of which many have now disappeared. Loyalty to the memory of their joint organization of the anti-Japanese underground was weakened progressively by each party's claiming the major responsibility for its success. More serious, the Communists' no-rent and no-tax campaign struck at the heart of the AFPFL's administration, which from the start had been plagued by lack of revenues. This cleavage in policy began to assume the form of a competition between the two parties in the organization of rival peasant and labor unions. Strikes, which the BCP and the AFPFL jointly organized for the purpose of putting pressure on the British, were called off by the AFPFL when it agreed on a working basis with Britain, but continued to be encouraged by the Communists. While the BCP did not oppose the elections to the Constituent Assembly, held on April 9, 1947, and even participated in them to a limited degree, it persisted in attempting to undermine public confidence in all the agreements negotiated by the AFPFL with the British. For its part, the AFPFL was in the parlous position of a party which, so long as it was in opposition to the British, had unleashed forces that it had later to control when they threatened to get out of hand. Inevitably this laid the AFPFL open to the communist charge of having "betrayed the revolution" and of "kneeling down to the British imperialist-capitalists."

Support of minorities

Despite communist propaganda and the loss of Aung San, the AFPFL has gone from strength to strength. Probably its greatest triumph lies in winning over to incorporation within the Union of Burma the indigeuous minority groups whose numbers, complexity, and traditional friendship with Britain presented enormous problems. The Shans, for example, number about two million and are divided into thirty-three feudal principalities of widely differing size and development; the Karens, of whom there are approximately 1,400,000, live scattered all over Burma, are in large part Christianized and have periodically suffered pogroms at the hands of the Burmans. The 360,000 or so Kachins are organized into tribes, as are the almost equally numerous Chins, who present the further complication of speaking twenty-two distinct dialects. In addition there are the Nagas and Was, some of whom are addicted to head-hunting and many of whom have never been administered at all. Elimination of these so-called Scheduled Areas was recognized by Aung San to be so supremely important in the formation of a Union of Burma as to make him willingly grant large concessions to their aspirations in the form of considerable political and cultural autonomy. First through the Panglong Agreement of February 1947 and later through drawing them into the Constituent Assembly—to which a Shan chief was elected

as first president—all the minorities except a section of the Karens and some Arakanese were brought voluntarily to accept close political association with the Burmans.

Other than those Karens who prefer some tie-up with the British Empire or a completely independent status, the only dissident indigenous element is the Arakanese, who have developed no less than three different groups of separatists. Some Muslims in northern Arakan have expressed a desire to join Pakistan, but Jinnah has discouraged and disavowed them. Followers of the Buddhist monk, U Seinda, have carried on the guerrilla activities originally directed against the Japanese with no clearly defined objectives other than those deriving from an intense regionalism. A third group, whose strength is difficult to estimate and whose actions are hard to distinguish from those of bandits, is allied to Thakin Soe's communist party. The central government has repeatedly claimed the situation in Arakan to be "in hand," but it has had to dispatch thither armed and police forces as well as one of its ablest divisional commissioners.

Present economic aims

Although the AFPFL's main drive centered on wresting concessions from Britain, Aung San found time in various speeches to outline his economic policy. After his murder had enhanced his already great popularity by the martyr's crown, it became a sacred duty for his successor, Thakin Nu, to implement his program. A Rehabilitation Conference, convened by Aung San on the eve of his death, was entrusted with short-term planning, while the drafters of the new constitution (drawn up by the AFPFL committee and passed by the Constituent Assembly in record time) embodied his long-range policy.

Of the present government's firm intention to establish state socialism there is no doubt. The republic's Parliament has been given power to nationalize "any single branch of Burma's economy or single enterprise"; to expropriate or limit private property with or without compensation, as the law prescribes; to forbid the use of private property "to the detriment of the public good"; to nationalize the land and abolish all large land-holdings as soon as circumstances permit; to help workers to organize themselves against economic exploitation; to assist economic organization not working for profit; and to nationalize all public utilities and exploit natural resources through state- or company-owned organizations. This last-mentioned policy is somewhat modified by a provision permitting companies to operate if sixty percent of their capital is owned by the Union government or citizens. Foreign investors in Burma have been concerned to know just how fast and in what sequence this program is to be carried out. Already notice has been served on the teak forest concessionaires and it has now become clear that agriculture is the first local industry slated for reform. Enterprises such as

mining, which require large capital or advanced technical knowledge for their rehabilitation and operation, are likely to come much later on the official agenda.

There are obvious reasons for this primary concentration on agriculture. Today rice is fetching an unprecedentedly high price in world markets and this level is likely to be maintained for some time to come. In the financial year just passed, the bulk of Burma's external income came largely from the sale of rice and the government needs great sums of money to rehabilitate the country as well as to launch new schemes like its industrialization program. Two-thirds of the population live by agriculture: rice is the mainstay of the people's diet. A plan—inevitably for five years—had been drawn up for the early rehabilitation and eventual expansion of paddy cultivation. To implement it the government will have to tackle three allied problems of considerable complexity.

Attempts to end banditry

Of these peripheral problems, perhaps the least complicated is that of crime. Farmers have been refusing to cultivate fields lying at any distance from the protection of their villages. Inhabitants of bandit-infested areas have been drifting to the towns, particularly Rangoon, where the housing problem is already acute. Boats carrying agricultural produce to the main ports and to deficit food areas have had to be protected by armed escorts. The police, who have always been unusually unpopular in Burma, have done some effective work in rounding up bandits, but they are widely believed to be corrupt, unreliable to any government in power, and demoralized by political aspirations. Further, banditry has long been the national sport of the Burmese, enjoying a glamor due to its association with resistance to British authority and to the quick profits and the relief it affords from the monotony and poverty of village life. The political assassinations of last July drew official and popular attention to the need for drastic and speedy crime-curtailement measures. In a strikingly rare instance of AFPFL-Communist cooperation, the leaders of both parties recently toured the districts exhorting bandits to surrender their arms and persons. The previous policy of leniency towards "misguided" bandits has now given way to severity. On November 15, 1947 the mere possession of unlicensed firearms became a capital offense. Some success has attended these efforts but there remains a large quantity of arms in the hands of Communists and some hill tribes, according to an official statement made last December.

Stimulating trade, industry, agriculture

The problem of stimulating production by supplying inducement goods for farmers, who still lack many essential items, ties in with the government's

whole policy of economic nationalism. Specifically, it involves the large questions of imports, distribution, and industrialization. In recent months Burma has sought to redress the markedly unfavorable trade balance of the postwar period by drastically reducing imports of nonessential goods and of those requiring the outlay of hard currencies. As to distribution, some of the British-organized Project Boards have been either liquidated or reoriented and are being supplemented by consumers' cooperative societies which the government is in process of setting up in every town and village tract of Burma. It should be noted, however, that it is not the principle of a planned economy inherent in these boards which has aroused intense Burmese hostility but the belief that they were foisted on the country by the wartime government-in-exile at Simla for the sole purpose of rehabilitating British economic interests and that they have been inefficiently, expensively and, in some cases, corruptly administered.

Industrialization schemes would begin with the official encouragement of cottage industries and the training abroad of Burmese technicians. Eventually they would include the development of hydro-electric power to compensate for Burma's lack of coal (and iron) resources. A modest beginning is already envisaged for a local chemical industry, chiefly to supply fertilizers for Burma's arable lands.

The third and most difficult problem involved in the agricultural rehabilitation program is one that has international complications—the questions of land tenure and agricultural credit. In prewar days non-agriculturists, particularly Indian Chettyars (moneylenders), owned nearly half the land in Lower Burma; about fifty percent of the tenants there changed holdings every year owing to high rents and general insecurity of tenure. Even before the war one hundred million rupees were required to finance the annual rice crop, of which by far the largest part came from those same non-agriculturist landlords and from village shopkeepers charging exorbitant rates of interest. Since the British reoccupation the government has given a subsidy for every acre of fallow land brought back under cultivation as well as cash-and-kind loans to farmers. But neither measure has furnished more than transient and insufficient aid. Prewar legislation (the Land Purchase Act, the Tenancy Act, and the Land Alienation Act), as well as the Moneylenders Act of 1945, the Land Disputes Act of 1946 and the Agriculturists Debt Relief Act of 1947, represents as yet incomplete efforts to get the land out of the hands of non-agriculturists and into those of cultivators and to scale down the latter's heavy burden of debt. They have not solved, however, the problem of regularly supplying sufficient agricultural credit nor have they outlined the means and methods whereby the land will be bought up and distributed.

While Burmese landowners have already voiced strong disapproval of the government's agricultural policy, the Chettyars are believed to welcome the chance to get rid of their landholdings in Burma, provided, of course, they receive fair compensation. However, the Chettyar problem is linked to the

vaster question of Burma's whole relationship with India which has not yet been regulated by treaty. To a marked degree the war mitigated the Indian minority problem in Burma by halving the number of local Indian residents and by checking the inflow of Indian laborers and capital. Recollections of the Indo-Burmese racial riots of 1930 and 1938 and of Bose's abortive Provisional Government of India, whose headquarters were for a time in Japanese-occupied Rangoon, have considerably chastened the Indians in Burma. They are now striving to stand in well with the Burmese. On the Burmese side, the fact that India is Burma's best customer and provisioner makes it expedient for them not to antagonize their increasingly powerful neighbor. The far smaller Chinese minority in Burma has never presented such economic, political, and social problems as have the Indians.

Other handicaps and assets

The foregoing outlines some of the immediate, major problems facing the newest comer to the comity of nations. There are, too, other less pressing matters such as the reform of village and district administration and the reorganization of the educational system. These will have to be tackled eventually. In the realm of intangibles there are also certain psychological handicaps to be overcome. Burmese nationalists are parochial and self-satisfied in their outlook and sensitive to real or imagined slights in foreign relations. It is not, of course, their fault that the Burmese have been isolated from world contacts or that they have had little experience in the management of their own affairs. However, in contrast to the Indonesians, they have little appreciation of the difficulties which they face, having long assumed that the mere achievement of independence would automatically solve all their problems. They are unaware of the humble place which Burma occupies internationally. Apparently they anticipate, for example, that foreign capital is so eager to invest in their country that it will accept any terms which the Burmese care to impose.

On the bright side of the picture, the Burmese have charm, intelligence, an aptitude for learning, and fervent patriotism. Their country is rich in resources which the world now needs. There is no pressure of population upon land—roughly 17,000,000 inhabitants for 260,000 square miles. Burma's budget for 1947-48 is virtually balanced. Youthful leaders abound who are far more earnest, honest and patriotic than were their primarily office-seeking prototypes of the prewar period. With the exception of a few dissident enclaves, the Burmans have won over the minority groups. They have achieved an amicable and generous settlement with Britain and are preparing to enter various international organizations. Burma needs capital and techniques but even without them she can get along. In brief, the government can afford to make some mistakes.

Within the country the AFPFL is paramount and should continue so for some time to come. Boh Let Ya, who is being groomed to succeed Thakin Nu, is, however, a largely unknown quantity and his statesmanship awaits the test of experience. A new rightist opposition is in the process of formation among the propertied Burmese whose interests are being adversely affected by the government's social policy, as indicated by the resignation last January of wealthy Henzada U Mya from the Cabinet. This group, of which the Burmese landowners, merchants, and industrialists form the core, might be supported by foreign capitalists and also by the pongyis (monks), who have a tradition of aggressive political activity and who have been strangely quiescent since the AFPFL came to power. At the other end of the political spectrum are the Communists, whose latest overtures for reunion with the AFPFL were rebuffed and whose popular support has been visibly declining. Nevertheless, they might conceivably rally to their banner all those elements in Burma which feel that the "revolution" is not going far or fast enough. Against this possibility must be balanced the personal antagonism existing between the various communist leaders. In preparation for assaults from both the right and the extreme left, as well as to obviate the dangers inherent in the existence of a private army like the People's Volunteer Organization, which Aung San had organized out of his Resistance forces during his anti-British period, a new organization is being formed in the heart of the AFPFL. This new unit, called the Marxist League, will be officially established with the merger of the Socialist Party and the People's Volunteer Organization on April 30, 1948.

Storm clouds undoubtedly hang on Burma's horizon, but at the moment they seem neither very near nor very black.

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BURMA COMPROMISE

Clarence Hendershot

Source: *Far Eastern Survey* 16(12) (1947): 133-8.

The Anglo-Burmese Agreement signed in London January 27, 1947 relieved a situation which had become extremely tense. For fifteen months Anglo-Burmese relations had been growing progressively worse until there appeared to be but two alternatives: an agreement or bloodshed. In the crisis peaceful counsels prevailed. In a document notable for its simplicity, brevity, and directness, procedures were agreed upon whereby Burma might achieve self-government with the option of remaining in the Commonwealth or not, as the Burmans desired.

The steps by which this end was to be achieved may be summarized from the Agreement as follows: the elections scheduled for April would be for a constituent assembly rather than a prewar type legislature. While the constitution was being drawn up and the new government established, the existing government in which the Governor had supreme authority but permitted his Burmese Executive Council to exercise substantial *de facto* power would carry on. A Burmese high commissioner would be received in London to represent the interests of Burma; the British would facilitate the exchange of diplomatic representatives between Burma and other countries, and would also lend their support to the securing of membership for Burma in the United Nations and other international bodies. Other clauses had to do with the retention of British troops in Burma, the future status of the Frontier Areas, and provisions for a British loan. Any questions which might arise, it was agreed, would be "dealt with in the same friendly and cooperative spirit that has marked the present discussions."

The "friendly and cooperative spirit" in London was in sharp contrast to the events of the preceding twenty months. The Burmans, although they regarded the May 1945 White Paper as highly reactionary, nevertheless welcomed the returning Britons. The Burmans responded heartily to the democratic and friendly attitude of the British military, from Lord Mountbatten and General Slim, commander of the British ground forces in Burma, to the

private soldiers. Joint military action fostered mutual confidence and respect. No one has accused the Burmans of not cooperating fully and effectively against the Japanese from the time of their rising against the latter in March 1945 until the fighting was concluded well after V-J Day.

To administer civil affairs during the period of military government, the British had created the Civil Affairs Service (Burma), commonly known as CAS(B). Within a short time this group had become thoroughly unpopular. The British had quite naturally recruited much of the CAS(B) personnel from Burman exiles and Britishers formerly resident in Burma. Many Burmans now resented seeing these people in positions of authority. Some Burmans declined to serve under men formerly their juniors or even subordinates. To some Burmans, CAS(B) was just a scheme for the reestablishing of the former British companies, which many hoped had gone forever. Similarly, the Burmans who had remained in Burma resented the imposition upon them of economic plans made by an exiled government and applied, so they felt, without any consideration for their wishes. The British replied that Burmans had participated in the planning (those who had fled to India), and that the interests of Burma had been consulted.

Restoration of civil government

A crisis developed in October when Sir Dorman-Smith returned to restore civil government. During the war Sir Dorman-Smith had championed the cause of Burma. Despite the unsatisfactory terms of the White Paper the people of Burma had continued to give the British wholehearted military assistance. They now fondly hoped for a generous gesture. But unfortunately the Governor was not authorized to make one. After an indefinite period of absolute rule by the Governor under emergency powers, the prewar political status was to be restored. The government elected under the 1937 constitution could then take up the question of the future status of Burma. He even went beyond the White Paper to mention independence as within the choice of Burma, for which, it is reported, he was taken to task by the Burma Office.

Recognizing the unattractiveness of the proposition, Sir Dorman-Smith undertook to rationalize and justify the decision of the Cabinet. To a people who had come to have a new confidence in themselves and had experienced self-administration for three years if not "independence," the proposition of Dorman-Smith was thoroughly unpalatable.

The issue was joined when the Governor undertook to form an advisory council. Claiming the support of the entire population of Burma, Aung San insisted on the right to nominate all fourteen members of the proposed Executive Council. Sir Dorman-Smith insisted that he must retain control of defense, home affairs, and finance. To this Aung San's Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League acceded, but not until sharp words had passed between the Governor and Aung San over the latter's bid for the office of Home Affairs.

The Governor refused to accept a Communist proposed by the AFPFL. The latter complained that he tried to reduce their representation from eleven to seven.

Unable to get the cooperation of the AFPFL, His Excellency appointed a council mostly of old school politicians. Three positions were left vacant for the AFPFL, but instead of accepting them they launched a campaign for independence.

The strength of the AFPFL lay first in their unity and public support, second in their capacity for obstructing the government, and finally in their military strength.

The Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League was quite unlike any Burmese political organization the British had experienced. It was new and different. The Japanese had scarcely overrun Burma before Aung San and the rest of the "Thirty Heroes" who had helped them were organizing to drive them out. A number of groups seem to have been at work, but the most successful were the Peoples Revolutionary Front, the Communists, and the Burma Defense Army commanded by Major General Aung San. By August 1944 these revolutionary groups had united to form the AFPFL.

The British were aware of this development. As early as 1942 the Burmans had sent Thakin Thein Pe to India to contact them. Thereafter, numerous Burmese and British agents passed between India and Burma. By late 1944 the AFPFL leaders were getting anxious to come out openly against the Japanese, especially when the latter manifested suspicions by withdrawing the Burmese forces to points where they could be watched.

Finally, despite British counsel to the contrary, the AFPFL determined to strike. The plan was skillfully arranged and expertly managed. On March 27, 1945, General Aung San held a review of the Burmese army in Rangoon. Then from the reviewing stand, in the presence of Japanese guests, he commanded them to go forth and kill the enemy. They melted into the jungles to slaughter Japanese wherever found. Burmese guerrillas everywhere joined in. This assault on the Japanese rear did not affect the outcome but it did help make it possible for the British 36th Army to take Rangoon before the monsoon broke. This gave them sea communications.

The success of the AFPFL strengthened its self-confidence as well as its unity. No longer forced to work underground, the AFPFL hurriedly consolidated and expanded its organization. Within a few months it had succeeded, in the words of the *Communist Guide Daily*, in transforming a "political syndicate" into a "general organization of the Burmese masses."

The widespread support of the AFPFL and its esprit de corps were underestimated by the British. Members declined to accept office in government as individuals. They would act only as representatives of the League, and on the latter's terms. The politicians whom Sir Dorman-Smith was able to gather proved to have no influence with the people, and were unable to acquire any. The AFPFL, by boldly appealing to the people not to cooperate with the

government, was able to block official policies. Non-payment of rent, non-payment of taxes, and refusal to sell rice to official buyers were among the weapons used by the AFPFL. Dacoity, the British believed, was being encouraged by the AFPFL.

The third source of AFPFL power was its military strength. The League had no army, but thousands of Burmans had been trained in guerrilla warfare and an unknown amount of munitions was about. The British had sufficient troops to take and hold any objective, but they knew that unless they could swing the support of the people, conquest would mean little.

The dominant characteristic of Burmese life became frustration. The AFPFL and the British were effectively blocking each other. The impasse became increasingly ominous. The Governor was not without sympathy for the Burmese position. The Burma Office he complained, would not take a realistic view despite his reports and advice. He sought Burmans outside the AFPFL who might be able to win popular support.

Efforts to bypass the AFPFL served only to make it work the harder to maintain its solidarity and leadership. It held frequent demonstrations, sponsored violent speeches against the government, published attacks in the press. Never before had the British suffered such verbal abuse in Burma. Some of it sounded very like threats of rebellion.

Return of Burmese politicians

One of the principal threats to the AFPFL position was the Burmese politicians returning from abroad and anxious for power. Among the first to arrive was Thakin Tun Oke, the political leader of the "Thirty Heroes." In 1942 he had organized government in the wake of the Japanese army. Shortly afterwards when the Japanese-sponsored government was established, he was replaced by Dr. Ba Maw as head of state. Suspected of planning to overthrow the latter, he was exiled to Singapore. Shortly after his return in January 1946, he accepted an appointment on the Executive Council. His friend, Thakin Ba Sein, returning from the same exile, undertook to build up the Dobama Party as a rival to the AFPFL.

U Saw, on returning from his wartime sojourn in Uganda, decided against entering the Executive Council. He attempted to revive his prewar Myochit Party. The return of Ba Maw created little stir. His friends were few; his enemy Aung San potent. He tried to pull together his prewar followers of the Sinyetha Party.

The AFPFL retained its predominant position and Aung San his popularity, but these revived parties, by advocating competing programs, forced it to adopt an increasingly uncompromising position.

Despite political obstruction and the scarcity of essential materials, some progress was made in rehabilitation, especially of the transportation system, the Rangoon sanitary system, and in agriculture, but general economic

conditions continued bad. Consumer supplies were short; prices high. Peasants deserted their fields because of the low price paid by the government for paddy. Some turned to fishing and business; others to dacoity. Lawlessness in turn interfered with agriculture. Peasants fled to cities for safety. Politicians made the most of the situation. Anti-government sentiment mounted. Frustration deepened. Explosion threatened. In June Sir Dorman-Smith was summoned to London.

The Burmans came to associate the policy of the British not with Sir Dorman-Smith but with the Burma Office. Consequently when he was recalled they looked to him to plead their case, as he had done so often before. At the same time sensing a weakening of British determination, the AFPFL pressed its case more boldly. It issued a statement that it would support workers and peasants, technicians, government employees, tradesmen, teachers, students, and others in demands against the government. Specifically, it would undertake to get the government to lift its repressive measures against the press and civil liberties. The Burma Press Union thereupon resolved to boycott government press conferences and not to publish official releases until restrictions on the press had been lifted. The AFPFL directed all of its branches to celebrate certain national days, using only the party flag.

When the resignation of Sir Dorman-Smith was announced early in August, the Editor of the *Burmese Review*, who had worked with him closely during and after the war, declared "no Governor loved Burma more or had greater affection and good will for the Burmese."

The appointment of an army officer, Major General Sir Hubert Rance, formerly head of CAS(B), to succeed Sir Dorman-Smith gave the AFPFL only temporary pause. Aung San pleaded for absolute and complete unity of the masses to make possible complete and immediate victory. The former Burmese army was revived as the People's Volunteer Organization, "to serve the cause of national independence and democratic freedom in Burma, and to instil in the people of Burma the spirit of self-reliance and self-defense in all cases." U Saw's Myochit party revived its prewar Galon Tat, a uniformed semi-military organization. Other political organizations did likewise.

Sir Hubert Rance arrived in Rangoon on August 30. His task, he announced, was three-fold: first, and most important, "to press on with reconstruction and rehabilitation;" second, to prepare for elections; and third, to establish law and order.

Two days later the Rangoon police went out on strike. Night patrols were established by the military police and volunteers from Aung San's People's Volunteer Organization. The strike spread quickly to Henzada, Maubin, Twante, and other towns. Appeals to return to work went unheeded.

"The real significance of the strike," wrote the moderate *Burmese Review*, "lies in the widespread support which the strikers have received from the Burmese press, the Burmese public and from all political parties." "Short of

a rebellion," it continued ominously, "which every responsible Burman is anxious to avoid, the only means left to the Burmese people to ventilate their grievances and to show their objection to the present regime is to support all constitutional movements likely to expose and to embarrass the members of the Executive Council. This indeed is the secret of the popularity of the Rangoon Town Police Strike and of the public support given generously to all such movements."

The situation was growing desperate. Reports of important political talks circulated. On September 15 it was reported that Aung San had been invited to an interview with the Governor. Changes in the government were known to be impending. The AFPFL disclaimed responsibility for the police strike which was now in its tenth day, but the strike served a political purpose none the less. The employees of the Postal Department declared a strike. The employees of the Central Government Press staged a one-day sit-down. On the seventeenth the AFPFL issued a directive to all of its branches to hold demonstrations. The same day the resignation of the Executive Council was announced. *The Burman* warned that nothing less than a new council would satisfy, a "virtual National Government" in which the AFPFL must have a "predominant share."

New executive council announced

The Burmese had gained the initiative and obviously proposed to keep it. A general strike was called for the twenty-third. The paralysis of the civil administration was complete. On the twenty-sixth Governor Rance announced a new Executive Council of eleven members, six of whom were to be members of the AFPFL and five from other parties. Aung San was to be in charge of Defense and External Affairs, and to be Deputy Chairman of the Council. The Council was to have all the authority and power which had been exercised under the 1935 act. Treasury controls of finance were to be relaxed, and the Executive Council would be kept in touch with the administration of the frontier areas.

A demonstration planned for September 29 became a victory parade with Aung San appealing to the people to continue to make a firm stand for national demands. The AFPFL with its thirty-two-year-old leader had not accomplished all it desired, but in less than a year it had achieved a strong political position. Aung San made no secret of his plans to press his political advantage. Significantly, within a few days the strikes were settled.

The AFPFL then brought to a crisis an internal struggle it had been having with the Communists. With the bluntness in which he takes pride, Aung San demanded the resignation of U Thein Pe, the Communist member of the Executive Council.

This action may have been caused by the internal struggle for power within the AFPFL. One of its chief effects was to strengthen Aung San's position

with the Buddhist priesthood and with the more conservative Burmans sufficiently to offset the strong and aggressive support hitherto received from the Communists. Another effect of this action, whether or not it weighed heavily with Aung San at the time, was to strengthen his position in future negotiations with the British.

Shortly afterwards the Under Secretary for India and Burma, Mr. Arthur Henderson, informed Parliament that he regarded the developments in Burma under the new Executive Council "with great satisfaction."

Having set its course, the AFPFL moved rapidly and methodically. On November 3 the Supreme Council voted six resolutions which pointed clearly the direction of their policy: (1) the new government should take steps to secure membership in the UN; (2) it should take immediate steps for entering into diplomatic relations with foreign countries; (3) the projects boards should be discontinued; (4) the April elections should be for a constituent assembly; (5) foreign troops should be replaced by Burmese troops; and (6) the rumor that certain districts of Burma proper were to be incorporated into a Kachin state should be investigated and, if true, resisted.

The Working Committee of the AFPFL announced on November 12 that it had directed the representatives of the latter in the Governor's Executive Council to present the following demands: that the British Government should make not later than January 31, 1947 an announcement to the effect that Burma would be completely free within one year; that the coming election would be for a constituent assembly and participated in only by those of Burmese nationality; that by not later than January 31 the Executive Council should be recognized as a national government, and that all projects should have been re-examined or abolished by the same date. If these conditions were not met, the AFPFL representatives on the Council would resign. The other members of the Executive Council joined the representatives of the AFPFL in these demands.

This amounted to an ultimatum. The open drilling of Burmese irregulars added to the tension. While the British were considering these demands, Aung San made an official tour of Upper Burma. He contacted AFPFL leaders, made speeches, and reviewed troops, including his People's Volunteer Organization. Everywhere he was acclaimed.

The tension was relieved somewhat by an announcement by the Governor on December 6 that "The British do not wish to stand in the way of Burma's freedom," followed by a statement two days later by U Tin Tut, Finance Minister, that "while no official reply had yet been received from London, the Executive Council had learned . . . that the British Government was prepared to meet the wishes of the Council." This did not keep Aung San, however, from issuing an appeal for funds to expand the activities of the AFPFL for the attainment of complete independence. Demonstrations of Communists with the threat of internecine fighting further heightened the tensions.

Prime minister Attlee's statement

Then came the momentous announcement of Prime Minister Attlee on December 20 that Burma was to be granted Commonwealth status or independence, whichever it preferred, "by the quickest and most convenient way possible." He referred to the White Paper as "not unchangeable." He mentioned the changing situation in India which had made Burma untenable. A Burmese delegation, he announced, was being invited to London to discuss the ways and means.

Burmese newspapers commented favorably on the statement but cynically hoped that the move was not another instance of dilatory tactics. The AFPFL announced on the twenty-third that while the announcement was not satisfactory, they considered it an earnest of good faith and a basis for discussion. Therefore they would advise their members on the Executive Council to accept the invitation to London. U Aung San, U Ba Pe (Commerce member), and Thakin Mya (Home member), were to represent the League. U Tin Tut (Finance member), an independent sympathetic with the position of the AFPFL, Thakin Ba Sein, president of the Dobama Asiayone, and U Saw, president of the Myochit Party, constituted the remainder of the delegation. U Saw and U Tin Tut must have recalled their ill-fated visit to London in 1941.

On the eve of his departure Aung San cautioned his followers to remain united and vigilant. He hoped for a peaceful solution, he said, "but if the negotiations fail the people must achieve freedom themselves." On arrival in London he announced, "I have come to sell the friendship of Burma and it will have to be bought."

At the first conference Mr. Attlee assured the Burmese representatives that the British Government would approach the problems "with completely open mind, with full sympathy for Burma's desires." Burma, he said, might have her independence "either within or without the British Commonwealth." In reply, Aung San said, "We have come here not only with an open mind, but with a new method of approach and with willingness to reciprocate such friendship and good will as His Majesty's Government and the people of Britain may hold outwards." Whatever differences the Burmese may have, he went on, they were united in demanding the right of their country to full and unfettered sovereignty.

Ten days passed before the secrecy of the negotiations was broken. There was much plain speaking on both sides, but gradually compromises were reached. The Burmese stressed their determination for complete sovereignty and for the incorporation of the Excluded Areas; the British tried to persuade them of their need for assistance, especially for rehabilitation, and urged them to make haste slowly.

To add to the tenseness of the situation, the AFPFL had scheduled a whole week of demonstrations beginning January 10 with different

organizations having assigned days. The University students declared for a strike to last from January 15 until the end of the month. They organized a "Steel Guard," with military drill. Twenty thousand people were reported to be parading the streets of Rangoon demanding acceptance by the British of the Burmese claim to complete independence. "For the second day this week," reported a Reuter correspondent on the seventeenth, "trade, commerce, and shipping were paralyzed and Government offices, schools, colleges, banks, business concerns and factories, though officially open, were absolutely empty. Not even the Rangoon telegraphs functioned."

The Communists, who had no representative in London, sponsored strikes, organized parades. The Red Flag Communists, as distinguished from their rivals, the White Flag Communists, twice stormed the Secretariat in Rangoon from which they were ejected the second time by the use of lathis and tear gas. The AFPFL sponsored protest meetings against Thakin Ba Sein and U Saw who were accused of insulting the Burmese masses by "making insinuations and expressing doubts about the leadership of Aung San . . . by asking the British to remember their responsibility for keeping law and order in the country . . . playing into the hands of the imperialists." Strikes were stifling the economic life of the country. Dacoit bands were more than ordinarily active. Independence machinations and internal politics combined with economic unrest to create in Burma an extremely explosive situation.

Nor did the signing of the London Agreement on January 27 quiet the situation. The refusal of U Saw and Thakin Ba Sein to sign it was sufficient warning that they would campaign against its acceptance by the people of Burma. Consequently the AFPFL staged demonstrations led by the People's Volunteer Organization to endorse the agreement. The strikes continued. Unrest and excitement were in the air. Aung San hurried home to report to the AFPFL and to prepare for the next step, the elections, in which it was already apparent he would have to reckon with all the dissidents, possibly with the union of all his foes. This created an entirely new situation for Aung San. The British were no longer his *bête noir*: now they were his allies, a fact of which his rivals did not fail to attempt to make political capital. Also, there was some explaining to do for the Delegation had not obtained all of its demands.

A written promise of the right to independence had been received, but no date had been fixed, contrary to the November demands. Neither did they get the promise of a national government by January 31, only a promise that the Interim Government would be given responsibility in practice. As for the Frontier Areas, they got a promise that they would be allowed to join Burma, if they so desired. This was satisfactory to Aung San. He was certain that the chiefs of these areas would decide to unite with Burma, which they did a few days later. Only passing reference was made to the Projects Boards. The failure of the Burmese in these regards may be explained in part by Burma's financial and economic weakness. Bankrupt, and faced with a tremendous

BURMA STANDS ALONE

Sir Raibert M. MacDougall

Source: *Foreign Affairs* 26(3) (1948): 542-53.

On January 4, 1948, the sovereign and independent republic of Burma was born, and a connection with the British Crown begun 120 years ago with the annexation of Tenasserim and Arakan in 1826 was ended. The parting was friendly, and it is of interest to trace the recent history of Burma to disclose the reasons for this, and also, perhaps, to form some estimate of the new state's prospects.

Prior to 1937 Burma was a province of India, and shared in the constitutional advances embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919, which handed one part of the functions of government over to ministers who were responsible to an elected legislature. This system of "dyarchy" had defects, but in fact it did what it was intended to do: it set up standards of democratic conduct in public affairs and trained the country's political leaders in the art of administration. It prepared the way for the next step forward, which was taken in Burma with the passing of the Government of Burma Act in 1935. By this Burma was separated from India, and given a constitution which laid so much responsibility on the elected representatives of the people as to bring the country close to the position of a Dominion.

Burma had long been divided when, in 1886, the third Burmese war brought upper Burma under British rule. The lower-Burma farmer, who was growing rich under British protection, had no nostalgic longings for the Mandalay monarchy. In upper Burma, the prestige of the monarchy had sunk so low, and the country was in such disorder, that the common folk welcomed the security and justice of the British régime. But at the end of the First World War, men's minds had absorbed the doctrines of self-determination, and a new nationalism sprang up, bent on making Burma a free partner in the British Commonwealth. The slow advance in constitutional development, though welcomed readily enough by the nationalists, was inadequate to satisfy their demands.

Thus it came about that although the constitution of 1935 gave wide scope to nationalist aspirations it did not really meet them; the bone of contention was the reservation of defense and foreign affairs to the Governor, and thereby indirectly to the Secretary of State in London. All established political parties coöperated in working the constitution, however, while protesting against its limitations. Only a group called *Thakins*, many of whom were students, opposed it uncompromisingly.

Though poor and ill-organized, this group brought a new stream of ideas into Burmese political life. Hitherto internal politics had been conservative, and parties differed little in their outlook on social, economic or political questions, though there was much personal and party rivalry. These young men, however, had studied Marx and Lenin and were greatly attracted by the doctrines of Communism. They were not orthodox Communists, having grasped the inherent unsuitability of formal Communism for their country, but they repudiated the older Burmese politicians as resolutely as they opposed the suzerainty of the British. They had a noticeable influence on the older parties, which were forced perceptibly to the Left.

The outbreak of war in 1939 did little to alter this situation. Burma as a whole was ready to coöperate in the war effort (which for the time being meant increasing exports at rising prices) and hoped for wider political powers in return. The entry of Japan into French Indo-China in 1940, however, brought fears of imminent Japanese attack—fears not lessened by the difficulty of getting defense equipment and a training staff from Britain, then locked in a deadly struggle in North Africa. Rightly or wrongly, the Burmese felt that the British Government did not fully appreciate their danger—a feeling which the British in Burma shared. Finally, towards the end of 1941, U Saw, the Premier, went to London and offered to intensify Burma's war effort to the fullest degree in return for an immediate promise of early Dominion status; but he made an unfavorable impression and was coldly received. He was subsequently arrested for making treasonable contact with Japanese agents and interned till the end of the war. His arrest caused no excitement in Burma, where a difficult and disappointing campaign was under way, and his Cabinet continued in office under his deputy until the evacuation in May 1942.

Meanwhile, most of the young *thakins* had been interned for impeding the war effort or had gone underground, and some, including U Aung San, had already made their way to Japan, to return in January 1942 with the invaders as guides and interpreters. They were thus well placed to take over the government under Japanese favor, but they had attracted to their standard a large number of doubtful characters and criminals. Once the occupation was complete, the Japanese partly suppressed them and entrusted the government to a group composed mainly of older politicians, under Dr. Ba Maw. The *thakins*, however, retained control of the Burma national army, which the

Japanese had purged and reorganized, and Dr. Ba Maw had little or no authority over U Aung San, its commanding general.

Independence had been declared in August 1943 with much pomp and ceremony, and, though the Burmese soon found it to be without much substance, it fired their imaginations. For the first time in modern history, Burma made treaties in her own right, and exchanged ambassadors with other Powers; for the first time, too, she had her own army, under her own Burmese officers. The *thakins*, however, had not led the Japanese into Burma merely to enthrone Dr. Ba Maw as head of a puppet government. They wanted real freedom, and in desperation turned back to the British, with whom, at the appointed hour (March 1945), they joined forces in the war against the Japanese. Since Japanese resistance collapsed soon thereafter they fought few engagements, but the prestige of the Patriot Burmese Forces (PBF), as they were now called, stood high at the end of the campaign. The Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) which they organized aimed at amalgamating all nationalist parties, and although a few of the older politicians stood apart it became under Aung San's leadership the strongest political body Burma had yet seen.

A few weeks later, in October 1945, the civil governor returned, and set about forming a council which, temporarily, would be a nominated body. The Governor, however, feared that though U Aung San had relinquished his military rank, a government dominated by the AFPFL would amount to a military dictatorship, and negotiations with him broke down. In the end, a council was formed without AFPFL participation. But AFPFL, despite significant defections, was still by far the strongest political force in the country, and without its coöperation the intended change to an elected government would be impracticable. Negotiations were therefore renewed but by the summer of 1946 had again failed. AFPFL prepared secretly for a showdown, and, when in September a change of governor seemed to promise no immediate change of policy, called strikes in the police department and elsewhere which brought the business of the country to a standstill and forced the resignation of the Governor's council. Only AFPFL could provide an alternative council or handle the strike, and the leaders of the party claimed and were given a clear majority of seats on the Governor's council. It was a bloodless and successful revolution. The council assumed most of the powers of ministers under the 1935 Act, while U Aung San, who was vice-chairman under the Governor, took the "reserved" portfolio of defense and foreign affairs, hitherto administered by a European official.

II

Once in power, however, the AFPFL leaders found, like many others before them, that a change of government does not of itself cure a country's ills. The strikes could be settled only by extravagant concessions which the country could ill afford, and bred a crop of fresh disturbances, fomented mainly

by Communists to embarrass the new régime. Police discipline had been undermined, and violence spread unchecked over wide areas, so that many farmers abandoned their fields and fled for safety to the towns. The AFPFL Government was in a dilemma, for it had denounced its predecessors as reactionaries, and now to its dismay found itself turning to the very measures it had condemned to restore order. The line taken was that this violence was the logical continuation of the Burmese resistance movement, and would cease when Burma was completely free; or, if it did not, at least the government would then have the support of public opinion in suppressing it.

The British Government in London meanwhile had not been idle. Its main concern was not, as AFPFL had thought, to consolidate British control over Burma, but to secure rapid physical reconstruction and the restoration of democratic government, and so reduce or at least define its own imperial obligations and financial commitments. British interests in Burma were not incompatible with democratic development, even if that should result in secession from the Commonwealth, though the British naturally hoped it would not; secession would be a cheap price to pay for peace and prosperity in at least one corner of South East Asia. Thus the British had readily accepted the changes in September and were quite willing to discuss further changes if necessary. They accordingly called a conference in London in January 1947. This resulted in an agreement signed by Mr. Attlee and U Aung San by which the future status and constitution of Burma were left to the decision of a constituent assembly, which the Burmese delegates undertook to have elected in April. In the meantime, a freer hand was given to the Governor's council, which would now act as an independent cabinet in virtually all respects. The position of the Burmese hill peoples was to be safeguarded until they should have the opportunity to make a free choice as to their future.

In Rangoon, matters were in turmoil. Party headquarters under the leadership of Thakin Nu had been certain the London talks would fail, and busied itself organizing strikes and demonstrations. Some of these broke out prematurely, and it was months before the government, now shouldering full responsibility, had them under control. Meanwhile the Communists had exploited the situation to the full, and denounced U Aung San for having succumbed to the wiles of the imperialists. Two dissentients on the delegation to the conference, U Saw and Thakin Ba Sein, took a similar line, but the Communists were the more formidable. Numerically small, they were well organized, and in Arakan and two districts of central Burma held almost complete control. One wing, the "White Flag" Communists, had coöperated fitfully with AFPFL, and U Aung San continued to hope for their assistance. The Red Flag Communists, however, were implacable. Disorder was their object, and disorder they achieved. But Aung San went ahead with his plans, and his first success came when by statesmanlike concessions he won over the hill peoples, except for a section of the Karens. The elections

in April passed off peacefully, and gave him an overwhelming majority. AFPFL, now firmly in the saddle, adopted a program for the constituent assembly which made it clear Burma would choose the status of an independent republic. This was confirmed a month later (June 17, 1947) by the constituent assembly. U Aung San's deputy, Thakin Nu, then led a delegation to London to discuss the transfer of power, agreement was soon reached, and Thakin Nu returned to Rangoon, while some of the delegation went off to visit other European countries to study their constitutions.

This was the position when, on July 19, the world was shocked by one of the most dastardly political crimes of modern times. About half-past ten in the morning, a gang of armed men drove into the Secretariat in Rangoon, shot down the sentry at the door of the council chamber and forced their way in. The Governor's council was in session, with U Aung San in the chair. The gangsters sprayed the room with bullets, and Aung San, with six of his colleagues and a Burmese secretary, fell dead or dying on the floor. Rangoon was thrown into panic, and for a time the wildest rumors and fears prevailed. In a few hours, however, the British Governor, Sir Hubert Rance, had sworn in Thakin Nu in U Aung San's place and filled the vacant seats with men pledged to carry out the policy of their murdered leader. Aung San's body was embalmed, and lay in state for weeks amid the mourning of the nation. The coup d'état had failed. Aung San had sealed his faith with his blood, and his successors pressed on with full vigor to bring his plans to fruition.

Suspicion for the murder at once fell on U Saw. His life had been attempted in the autumn of 1946, supposedly by an AFPFL faction that wished to keep him out of the Governor's council. He had taken part in the London talks in January, but had at the last minute denounced the Attlee-Aung San agreement; and he was thought to be jealous of Aung San's leadership. Some days after the crime a party of young desperadoes was arrested, and in their statements implicated U Saw and some of his associates. The trial took place before a special tribunal and in December U Saw and a number of others were found guilty and sentenced to death.

III

Preparations for the new government meanwhile went on apace. A British mission to Burma concluded a defense agreement on August 29, and the treaty itself was signed in London in October 17, to take effect January 4, 1948.

Thus Britain and Burma parted, not only without bitterness, but with cordial good will. Feeling between the British and Burmese had always been good, and with few exceptions the two races had never allowed their political differences to cloud their personal relations. But in the Burmese mind there had always been a suspicion, sometimes dormant, sometimes lively, that the British usually had some undisclosed and wholly selfish object in view. This suspicion was finally dispelled when the political leaders of the two countries

met around the conference table in London. A new atmosphere was created, in which the conditions of a settlement could be determined with mutual satisfaction. The ready agreement of the British Government that a constituent assembly should be convened with full authority to decide whether Burma should remain in the Commonwealth, and to draft the new constitution, was the chief factor in creating this new atmosphere of mutual confidence. On the Burmese side, the decisive factor of the successful settlement was the determination of U Aung San and his successor to adhere to the London agreement in spite of pressure from his more extreme followers, and obstruction from the Communists.

The keynote of the new constitution is struck in the preamble:

We, the people of Burma, including the frontier areas and the Karenni states, determined to establish in strength and unity a sovereign independent state, to maintain social order on the basis of the eternal principles of justice, liberty and equality and to guarantee and secure to all citizens justice, social, economic, and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action; equality of status, of opportunity and before the law, in our constituent assembly this tenth of Thadingyut waxing 1309 B.E. (24th day of September 1947 A.D.) do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this constitution.

The constitution then provides for a "Union of Burma," with Burma proper as the predominant partner. The frontier peoples enjoy equal status in the Union, but have autonomy for local affairs in subsidiary states. The Karens (other than those in Karenni) whose prospects under the new dispensation had aroused misgiving in Britain and the United States, are given an option to join with Karenni in forming a Karen state, and until they do will have a council and a minister for Karen affairs. Chapter II of the Constitution embodies a charter of citizenship and human rights. Chapters III and IV provide for the improvement of workers' and peasants' conditions; for the prohibition of large landholdings; for the improvement of social and educational services; for the care of ex-servicemen and their families; for the establishment of a planned economy based as far as possible on nationalized or cooperative enterprise; and, finally, for the protection and encouragement of all useful arts and sciences, and cultural institutions.

Chapter V provides for the quinquennial election of a President of the Union by both chambers in joint session by secret ballot. His powers are virtually limited to the appointment of a Prime Minister on the nomination of the Chamber of Deputies, and of other ministers on that of the Prime Minister. All legislation requires his signature, but if he does not sign within seven days, his signature is deemed to have been given. He thus has no power to reserve bills. He may, however, address, or send a message to, the

legislature on any matter of national or public importance. He may also refuse to dissolve or prorogue the Chamber of Deputies when this course is advised by a prime minister who has lost his majority, but in this case he must call on the Chamber to nominate a new prime minister.

The legislature, which with the President constitutes "Parliament," consists of two houses. The upper house is a Chamber of Nationalities, with 125 seats, of which 72 are reserved for Chans, Kachins, Chins, Karenni and other Karens, while 53 go to the rest of Burma.¹ The lower house is the Chamber of Deputies, to consist as nearly as possible of twice the number of members as the Chamber of Nationalities. It is directly elected on a very wide franchise by constituencies of varying sizes within certain defined limits in the whole of Burma, with special provision for Karen representation. Except for money bills, legislation may be initiated in either house; the power of the upper house over money bills is extremely limited. Certain subjects concerning the states are reserved for the state councils, except when the President has proclaimed a grave emergency. When both chambers are not in session the President may, under stringent safeguards, pass ordinances which have a very limited duration.

The executive consists of the Prime Minister and his colleagues, who are collectively responsible to the Chamber of Deputies, and must have a majority there. Separate provisions are made for the appointment of an attorney-general, an auditor-general and a public service commission. A carefully drafted chapter (VIII) provides for the independence of the judiciary. In particular this chapter gives the high court power to try cases, and the supreme court power to hear appeals, involving questions "as to the validity of any law having regard to the provisions of the constitution."

The document is concise, and constitutes a workmanlike and reasonably complete blueprint for a new state. It meets ingeniously the particular difficulty of giving a fair amount of freedom to the frontier peoples without hamstringing the central government. And it attempts with fair success to combine the two ideologies from which it stems—the traditional British reverence for parliamentary democracy (which in the last 30 years has become a commonplace of Burmese political thought), and the aggressive Socialism which its authors imbibed from European leftist writers. The declaration of human rights, the collective responsibility of ministers to parliament, the independence of the judiciary, and the second chamber with limited powers are typical of the former. On the other hand, the specific provisions for the socialization of industry, and the emphasis on the protection of workers and peasants, suggest that the doctrines of Socialism are meant to be basic in the state, and not open to discussion between rival parties in parliament.

IV

In Article I of the treaty of October 17, 1947, between Britain and Burma, "the government of the United Kingdom recognize the republic of the Union of Burma as a fully independent sovereign state." Subsequent articles provide for the retention of British citizenship by certain persons, the payment of pensions to former British civil servants, the continuance of international obligations and of certain contractual obligations, the conclusion of a treaty of commerce and navigation, the continuance of postal, telecommunication, and civil aviation services, and so on. The treaty also provides for adoption of the defense agreement signed in Rangoon on August 29. An annex contains correspondence providing for compensation of United Kingdom companies if their property is expropriated or acquired in pursuit of the policy of state Socialism in the period before the conclusion of the treaty of commerce and navigation. The defense agreement provides for the evacuation of British forces, a British military mission to Burma, some military equipment from the United Kingdom, and mutual concessions on the use of airdromes and harbors.

The treaty was welcomed by the Burmese, since it recognized in full the independence of their country. It was generally welcomed by the British also, though in some circles there were misgivings lest the new government should go too fast with its Socialist policy. In November 1947, the Socialist Party in AFPFL made an alliance in a new "Marxist League" with the People's Volunteer Organization (known generally by its Burmese initials as the PYT)—a para-military body of young men recruited originally by U Aung San. The more conservative elements in AFPFL are thus completely overshadowed, and at the first election under the new constitution the forces of the Left will probably sweep the board. These forces, however, are Socialist, and not Communist; indeed, the League was formed a few days after the final rupture between AFPFL and the Communists on November 18. But, since the *presidium* of the League is drawn from both the Cabinet and the PYT leaders, the natural result is to pull the government along the road to the Left. Consistent with this view was the announcement a few days later by the Commerce Minister U Ko Gyi, himself a member of the *presidium*, that the League hoped to nationalize the land and major industries within the next two years. Confusion was increased when at the same moment his colleague, the Forest Minister, offered a more practical proposal that Burmese lessees be substituted for Europeans in the forest industry over a period of the next ten years. Nationalization as demanded by U Ko Gyi would involve the expropriation or acquisition of existing plants and concessions, which could be done only with compensation and after proper inquiry. The government would then have to find the staff, technical and administrative, to replace the existing European experts.²

In truth the task before the new republic is formidable enough without such added complications. Burma was fought over twice, and devastated by the air forces of both sides. For more than three years of enemy occupation, education and other social services either were at a standstill or retrogressed. Thousands of boys and young men have learned no calling but that of partisan, and need little encouragement to form armed bands that, whatever their ostensible object, often take to robbery. In 1945, arms and ammunition were easily acquired, and large quantities were carefully stored away. Robberies are planned affairs with modern equipment, and police work takes on the character of military operations. This makes law and order difficult and expensive to maintain. Again, railway, river, road and harbor equipment, electric plant and all kinds of machinery, were almost nonexistent at the time of liberation. Admittedly, in the last two years, good progress has been made, with British help, but Burma is as yet far from being a going concern. After initial hesitation, law and order have been tackled resolutely by Thakin Nu's government, and many illicit arms brought in, but areas in central Burma and Arakan are still quite out of control. Road, rail and river transport, posts and telegraphs, and port establishments are functioning, but to some extent on an improvised basis, and with only moderate efficiency. Most of the Europeans in all services have been dispensed with, and it will stretch the resources of Burma to the utmost to replace them.

Trade and commerce are just beginning to revive. Thus, the export surplus of rice products is rising from less than 1,000,000 long tons last year to 1,500,000 this year, but is still a long way below the prewar average of 3,000,000 to 3,500,000 tons. Forest work was stopped last year by the lawless conditions in the countryside, and this must cut supplies of timber in the near future. The oil fields and refineries were completely wrecked in 1942 in order to keep the Japanese from using them and now Burma has to import oil to meet her own requirements, instead of producing nearly 1,000,000 tons, much of it for export, as before the war. The oil companies have begun rehabilitation, but in the current atmosphere of physical insecurity and political uncertainty only limited progress is possible. Much the same situation prevails in the base metal mining industry, which though less important is by no means insignificant. The government's attitude towards invested capital deters the existing companies from spending more than a minimum of money on rehabilitation, and frightens off new investors. Since there is little free capital available locally, and an acute shortage of trained Burmese to work either as independent operators or as servants of a state industry, there is thus something of a deadlock. It cannot be broken until law and order are completely restored and the government makes up its mind how to reconcile its Socialist plans with the need to attract foreign enterprise. In the meantime, industry and trade languish, unemployment looms ahead, the country is short of foreign exchange, and the government is losing heavily from the loss of taxes and royalties.

No account of Burma's position would be complete without reference to her relations with India. Over 70 percent of prewar foreign trade was with that country, and about 1,000,000 Indians lived and worked in Burma, as laborers, artisans, traders, moneylenders and professional men. Some 400,000 left the country on the Japanese invasion, and the terms on which they are to be allowed back have been the subject of much acrimonious discussion. Burma is underpopulated, and the Indians in Burma had made a definite place for themselves in its society and its economy. But their predominance in many spheres, particularly money-lending, trading and the professions, proved repugnant to the rising nationalist feeling, while their success in humbler occupations aroused the jealousy of the masses, sometimes to the pitch of riot and murder. It would be pointless to try and apportion the blame for this unhappy state of affairs: what is important is that Burma and the two new countries of India and Pakistan should settle their differences expeditiously, and make a long-term agreement on trade and immigration. In almost every respect the interests of the three countries are complementary. Cordiality, however, is not yet firmly enough established to offer prospects of early success, and the fact that the old India is now split in two, while Burma has gone out of the Commonwealth, does not make negotiation any easier.

Such are some of the problems that face the new state. They are formidable, but the men who have taken responsibility for them are young and enthusiastic, and the whole country is pervaded with a spirit of optimism. Burma has many good friends, and if these admirable qualities of optimism and enthusiasm can be harnessed to the humdrum tasks inherent in building up a new state, this, the latest of republics, can face the future with confidence.

Notes

- 1 The racial distribution in Burma is approximately as follows: Burmese 11,000,000, Shans (Tai) 1,500,000, Karens 1,500,000, Mons 400,000, Chins 300,000, Kachins 300,000, Chinese 300,000. Indians 1,000,000, others 600,000.
- 2 In January 1948 the Burma government gave notice that it would proceed immediately with the nationalization of the river transport, and of one section of the forest industry. Some British expert staff would be retained and compensation would be arranged after discussion.

BURMA'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE: THE TRANSFER OF POWER THESIS RE-EXAMINED

Hugh Tinker

Source: *Modern Asian Studies* 20(3)(1986): 461-81.

On 3 May 1945, British-Indian forces landed in Rangoon. The Japanese had pulled out. The city was liberated. On 16 June there was a victory parade, though the final victory over Japan was still distant and most of their conquests were intact. Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, took the salute while detachments representing the one million men under his command passed by in massed array. Famous regiments from Britain, India and Nepal; the Royal Navy; the Royal Air Force; men from the United States Air Force. It was an impressive sight, though the ceremony took place in pouring rain. Amongst them all was a somewhat ragged band representing the Burma National Army which, having been raised by the Japanese, had fought for three months alongside the British.¹ Watching the parade from the central dais was a young man dressed in the uniform of a Japanese Major-General, though he also wore an arm-band with a conspicuous red star. The outfit was incongruously crowned by a pith sun-helmet—a *topi*. Probably most foreigners present assumed he was a Chinese officer. He was actually Bogyoke Aung San, commander of the BNA.

When the parade was over, Mountbatten entertained dozens of the Rangoon notables at Government House. When they had dispersed, he held a meeting with Aung San, his principal military supporter, Bo Ne Win, and his two chief political associates, the Communists Than Tun and Ba Hein.² Removing his *topi*, Aung San revealed a Japanese army shaven skull (*maru cōzu*). He had prominent bone structure, but most conspicuous were his intense, staring eyes. This was the man Mountbatten recognized as holding the key to the political and military future of Burma.

The meeting was very much at variance with the policy in London, and also that of Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the civilian Governor of Burma who had been in exile at Simla. Until recently, Aung San and his soldiers had been known to the British as the Burma Traitor Army. Mountbatten refused to accept this reading of the situation even though it represented the view of the Cabinet, the Chiefs of Staff, his own C. in C. Allied Land Forces South East Asia, and his own staff at Kandy concerned with military government. He was very conscious that the task of driving the Japanese out of South East Asia had only just begun. He needed a secure base for the hazardous assault upon Malaya. He could not risk a guerrilla rebellion in his rear. More profoundly, Mountbatten perceived that imperial high noon had passed away, with imperial sunset soon to follow. He recognized the urgency for the British to establish friendly relations with the younger generation of Asian nationalists. In these views he was encouraged by a man whose only standing among the massive SEAC staff was that of private friend and confidant—Peter Murphy, an adherent of the Communist Party from his Cambridge days.³

To make his position quite clear, Mountbatten issued an instruction on 'Policy to be adopted towards the Burmans'.⁴ This was regarded as very dubious by many of the Civil Affairs Officers, but the Supremo made it clear that anyone who 'sabotaged' his policy could expect to be court martialled. He had already replaced the head of Civil Affairs by a new man flown out from England, Major-General H. E. Rance, who accepted his chief's line whole-heartedly.

The approach of the Cabinet was markedly more cautious. In the statement presented to the House of Commons on 17 May 1945, emphasis was placed on the physical destruction suffered by Burma, and when military government was terminated (not expected then for at least another year) there would be three years of direct rule by the civilian governor before elections were held under the existing 1935 Act.⁵ The legislature would then be invited to frame a new constitution, though even then HMG 'would have continuing obligations after the establishment of full self-government in Burma'. Clearly, even under the most optimistic interpretation of this timetable the Burmese would not attain self-government for five to six years, and then the Frontier Areas would still be 'subject to a special regime under the Governor'. This programme had been finalized by the India Committee of the Cabinet whose chairman was Attlee and it continued to command his support after the Coalition was dissolved one week later.

The Burmese politicians, even the most moderate, were dismayed. The Japanese had granted them independence (after a fashion) in August 1943. At the hour of liberation almost all political elements were included in the newly formed Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. Their Supreme Council, meeting on 16 May, had demanded 'that the right of national self-determination shall be applied forthwith to Burma'.⁶ How could this be implemented? The overwhelming strength of the British military forces was

obvious to all. Hence, Than Tun as Secretary-General of AFPFL issued a directive headed 'Why we should not continue to revolt'. British policy was broadly known from newspaper reports, yet Than Tun argued with prescience that British economic and military strength had been weakened by five years of war. Imperialism would wither. The AFPFL did not directly challenge the British but simply reiterated the demand for 'immediate complete self-government'. In the same document there was a claim that the BNA be incorporated in a new Burma army. Than Tun concluded: 'The Revolutionary Council believes that we will achieve our freedom at the most within two years'—a prediction considerably more accurate than the British government's timetable.⁷

Mountbatten professed himself reassured by these and other reports, though British intelligence showed that in many places the BNA and AFPFL constituted a strong challenge to restored British administration, still lamentably thin on the ground. Mountbatten chose to play down these reports. In order to placate Dorman-Smith who was despatching agitated telegrams to London he arranged for the governor to meet Burmese leaders, both young and old, in HMS *Cumberland* in Rangoon river.⁸ Until he took over, the governor must not set foot on Burmese soil.

At the meeting with Aung San and the others on 16 June, Mountbatten insisted that they must attend the *Cumberland* conference. Putting his own construction on the White Paper of 17 May he declared: 'It offered Dominion Status to Burma within less than three-and-a-half years' (which manifestly it did not do). Mountbatten ventured into the delicate matter of the collaboration of the BNA with the Japanese—if guilty, some might have to stand trial for criminal actions. Though it was not mentioned, this included the case against Aung San who had taken part in the execution of a headman when the Japanese first entered Burma in January 1942. Aung San took all this in his stride, and according to Mountbatten's own version, the meeting 'broke up on a friendly note'.

The *Cumberland* conference went off to the satisfaction of Dorman-Smith. All the politicians present came up with a unanimous demand for 'the inauguration of a new Provisional Government to be nominated by AFPFL', the governor's powers to be 'minimized in every field except defence'. A Constituent Assembly should meet within a year and a new constitution to replace the White Paper scheme introduced. It was made clear that the prewar leaders—including that Vicar of Bray of Burmese politics, U Ba Pe—were fully behind the AFPFL proposals. Nevertheless, Dorman-Smith, whose capacity for self-deception was almost infinite, told London that Ba Pe and the old guard 'will play with us alright'. The new men, although 'sincere' were inexperienced: only Than Tun was capable of taking office. While anticipating 'a very uneasy year or so' he was in accord with the meeting in urging an early end to military government and early elections.

In the following months, Rance as military governor endeavoured to

liquidate the BNA. Its members were offered enlistment in battalions under British control with demobilization for those deemed unfit. Meeting succeeded meeting, but Aung San always produced reasons why they could not proceed immediately. The BNA (now renamed the Patriot Burmese Forces by Mountbatten's decision) was their major asset in any coming struggle against the British. At one meeting on 11 July the senior Burmese member of the ICS, U Tin Tut, sat beside Aung San, and the official record noted 'Throughout the conference U Tin Tut spoke for Bo Aung San who concurred in all he said'.⁹ This represented a new and formidable combination.

On 15 July Mountbatten joined the discussion. Aung San proposed (and this was accepted) that the reorganized regular army would have two 'wings', one formed of ex-BNA soldiers with their own officers, though under British command, and another wing of battalions raised from the tribal levies—Kachin, Chin, and Karen—who had fiercely harassed the retreating Japanese.¹⁰ Dorman-Smith was persuaded to accept this arrangement, in part because Tin Tut spoke so persuasively about Aung San. Dorman-Smith noted 'It is impressive how unanimous everyone is . . . in testifying to the integrity of this young man'.¹¹ However, while falling in with this proposal of the Supremo, the governor argued for an early return to civil government in areas cleared of the enemy. In his polished manner Mountbatten promised cooperation. Then he left to attend the Potsdam summit. Mountbatten was one of the very few who expected Labour to win the election, but until he reached Potsdam he had no inkling that the Far East war would be transformed by a new super-weapon, the atomic bomb. As Japan collapsed, Mountbatten was suddenly confronted by the extension of SEAC's boundaries to include Indonesia and Indo-China.¹² Of more immediate concern, Dorman-Smith bombarded the new Labour government with demands for the resumption of civil government in Burma. He stated he would tender his resignation if refused. This was to be the first ultimatum of several.

The Burmese also were quick to respond to the new situation. Than Tun stepped up the propaganda campaign to get rid of military government. A conference was convened to formulate fresh demands. Some 5,000–6,000 attended and the Rangoon shops were closed for the day. Aung San made the main speech, emphasizing the Burmese contribution to allied victory, pointing to Labour's electoral triumph as a sign that imperialism was on the way out, and warning that '99 per cent of the PBE would be unwilling to serve in the fighting forces of a country that was not free'. Tongue-tied when speaking in English, Aung San was an eloquent orator in Burmese. Than Tun followed, presenting a manifesto 'World Peace and Free Burma', in which he proposed the immediate setting up of a Provisional Government with full powers over internal and international affairs.¹³ The two young leaders were supported by politicians of the older generation, such as Ba Pe, as well as ethnic minority leaders, including the Karen, Saw Ba U Gyi.

In the midst of growing pressures, Mountbatten endeavoured to solve the twin problems of the procrastination of Aung San and the importunity of Dorman-Smith by summoning a high-level conference at Kandy, attended by his military top brass, senior British civil servants (and also Tin Tut) and a Burmese delegation (still mainly in Japanese uniforms) led by Aung San and Than Tun. It was a sign of the times that Tom Driberg, newly elected Labour MP, was also present. Things were not made easier by the refusal of Dorman-Smith to sit in the same room as Aung San. General Slim bluntly observed that 'the root of the trouble lay in the fact that the Burmese distrusted us'.¹⁴

However, a programme for an early handover to civil government was agreed with Dorman-Smith, followed by a detailed plan to embody PBF officers and men into the new Burma army. This was spelled out in the 'Kandy Agreement' signed by Aung San and Than Tun on 7 September.¹⁵ One item was the appointment of a Burmese Deputy Inspector General along with one representing the ethnic minorities, both under a British Inspector General. Simultaneously, Mountbatten offered the post to Aung San with the rank of Brigadier. He was far too shrewd to be sidetracked in that way, though the gesture was appreciated. The new Secretary of State, Pethick-Lawrence, advised the Prime Minister that they should speed up the return of the civil. Attlee was only half convinced, observing: 'There is an obvious risk in moving so fast', but somewhat reluctantly he agreed.¹⁶

The stage was now set for Dorman-Smith's return. A member of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, a Cabinet Minister under Chamberlain, he alternated between authoritarian aloofness and occasional flashes of insight into the new mood of Burmese nationalism. His real fault was that he operated a 'crony' system of government, listening to advisers, British and Burmese, who were quite out of touch with the new mood. From time to time the real world impinged on his consciousness, but invariably one of his cronies persuaded him to stick to a do-nothing policy.

He announced that he would go further than the White Paper, setting up an advisory council. An invitation went out to AFPFL. They claimed to nominate a majority of members of the Council. This claim was rejected, and Dorman-Smith formed a Council of his cronies (Sir John Wise, Sir Paw Tun, and Sir Htoon Aung Gyaw) and such politicians as he could lure away from AFPFL.¹⁷ He was confident that the League would split into factions. Already there were hints of tension between Aung San and his supporters and Than Tun and the Communists. The policy was to play for time.

The governor's equivocation was displayed in relation to the 1942 murder case involving Aung San. The matter was referred to the Cabinet and in November the India and Burma Committee (with Stafford Cripps in the chair) sanctioned a prosecution. Having been given the go-ahead, Dorman-Smith dropped the matter. No further action was taken.¹⁸

Also in November 1945, a meeting in New Delhi took a decision which

was later to prove the key factor at a critical moment in Burma. British-Indian troops had been sent to Java to rescue POWs and Dutch civilians. They clashed with Indonesian nationalist forces. In Surabaya on 29 October, Brigadier Mallaby was killed and a month of bitter fighting followed.¹⁹ Wavell, as Viceroy, Auchinleck, as Commander in Chief, India, and Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander were all agreed that the repercussions on Indian public opinion could be 'very serious'. Suppose that a similar conflict occurred in Burma, where some 79,000 Indian troops were stationed—what then? Mountbatten insisted that the handover to the civil had been premature; the situation was 'deteriorating'. They could not permit Indian troops to be used to suppress a popular rising. Henceforth, Indian soldiers in Burma were embargoed from intervening in a political confrontation.²⁰ Neither the AFPFL nor the Cabinet in London knew of this. AFPFL felt that their inability to communicate with Labour in London was a barrier. They asked to send a delegation: this was turned down, on Dorman-Smith's advice.

Three battalions of Burma Rifles had been created out of the PBF with former BNA commanders (Bo Ne Win and Bo Zeya) designated as commanding officers. However, the remainder of the former BNA did not simply become civilians: they were organized in the People's Volunteer Organization (*Pyithu Yebaw Tal*: army of comrades) wearing military uniform under their old officers. They continued to drill and bear arms (of which there were thousands 'underground' throughout Burma). Dorman-Smith dismissed these activities: 'Aung San is a tired and deflated little man', he told London.²¹ His report was sent on the eve of another major demonstration below the Shwe Dagon pagoda in January 1946 with 1,200 delegates and a total attendance estimated even by the British at 20,000 to 30,000. Aung San condemned the existing regime, which he described as 'Economic Fascism': the governor was 'the Dictator of Burma'.²² Than Tun was still General Secretary and drafted AFPFL pronouncements but Aung San had become the undoubted political leader. There were signs that he intended to distance himself from the Communists.²³

Like lightning out of a clear sky came a denunciation of Aung San as a murderer by a witness of the event (Tun Ok), who was himself under fire in the House of Commons, because in 1942 he had ordered the public display of the severed heads of British soldiers. Dorman-Smith informed London that he would prosecute Aung San 'at the first convenient opportunity'.²⁴ His telegram (24 March) arrived just after Pethick-Lawrence and the Cabinet Mission reached India. Attlee was in charge of the affairs of India and Burma personally, and for the first time acquired real knowledge of what was going on. The Prime Minister was increasingly perturbed by Dorman-Smith's vacillations and tergiversations. In Burma, the governor was advised by his own senior officials, as well as by the military not to press charges.²⁵ He held back. But the widow of the dead man petitioned for justice and he

then urged that 'we must let law take its course'.²⁶ Attlee accepted that there was no alternative, but when Pethick-Lawrence was informed he strongly objected: this might have repercussions on their delicate negotiations with the Congress. Dorman-Smith was told to stay his hand. There was a frantic exchange of telegrams between Rangoon and London with the governor switching the emphasis to a new political initiative, based upon various combinations of political rivals. This increasingly focused upon U Saw, Prime Minister of Burma on the eve of the Japanese invasion, when British code-breakers discovered his intention to collaborate with the Japanese, and he was interned in Uganda. Dorman-Smith had always liked Saw and now put him forward as the man to challenge AFPFL. However, on 6 May he surprisingly announced that Saw and Aung San were ready to cooperate, declaring 'The iron appears to me to be hot. With what force do you think I should strike?'²⁷

Trying simultaneously to keep abreast of the complex negotiations in Delhi, Attlee drafted an exasperated message to Pethick-Lawrence: 'I have received another long and incoherent telegram from Dorman-Smith. It is obvious that he has lost [his] grip. He changes his position from day to day . . . I am convinced he must be replaced'.²⁸ When the governor was asked to spell out all the factors in the situation with more precision he replied wildly that he was 'filled with dismay'. There was a 'magnificent opportunity' which he could only explain if he came to London: 'In the alternative I must ask to be relieved of post'. He had played into Attlee's hand, and was asked to return at once.²⁹

Meanwhile, in ignorance of this closet crisis AFPFL were putting on pressure. A second meeting of the Supreme Council, 16-23 May, launched a Freedom Fund and called for a one million membership drive. In case their demands were not met, an Executive Committee was set up to prepare for 'the struggle that may lie ahead'. While the Council made its plans, the PVO marched and drilled openly. On 13 May, members of the PVO were arrested at Tantabin, forty miles from Rangoon. On 18 May a procession of 1,000-1,500 marched in protest. The police opened fire: there were several casualties, three being fatal.³⁰ The governor interviewed Aung San, and those arrested were set free. Despite the explosive atmosphere, no rising followed. Perhaps Aung San believed the situation was drifting his way: certainly the senior British officials felt the governor had been too weak. However, for Dorman-Smith, time had run out. On 11 June he handed over to a temporary governor and left for London. Soon after arrival he learned he would not return.

The new man was Sir Henry Knight, a senior civilian from Bombay with special experience in food procurement. In the two-and-a-half months he was in Burma he raised the flagging efficiency of the administration. He also invented a formula which skilfully eliminated the dilemma of the charge against Aung San.³¹ However, Attlee was looking elsewhere for a permanent

replacement. After some delay he yielded to the urging of Mountbatten to offer the appointment to the former military governor, Rance, who was recommended as 'thoroughly straight' and 'refreshingly quick on the uptake'.³² What was he expected to do? Instructions received just before departure were 'To secure within the scope of the White Paper and the Act of 1935 an Executive Council . . . broader based and to include if possible a representative team from AFPFL'. As regards any timetable 'there is no advantage in fixing paper dates' while 'we should in general continue to avoid the term "Dominion Status" as the constitutional goal'. As for 'Independence': 'no reference should be made to it'.³³ Bearing these unpromising instructions, Sir Hubert Rance was sworn in on 31 August 1946.

Within one week reality burst in upon him. The Rangoon police went on strike. They had serious grievances; their pay had fallen far behind inflation. Rance rapidly discovered that his present Executive Council was useless and his senior officials out of touch. The strike threatened to spread, and AFPFL moved to exploit the possibilities. On 9 September Rance told Pethick-Lawrence 'I am playing a lone hand here'; he demanded the resignation of the members of the Council he had inherited and started consultations with Aung San and AFPFL.³⁴ He did not let them have all they wanted, but they formed a solid bloc in the new Council. One innovation was to designate Aung San as Deputy Chairman (almost at the same time Nehru assumed the same position with Wavell). Tin Tut took charge of finance, while among non-AFPFL members U Saw became Member for Education and Planning, a post he neither desired, nor filled with any competence.

Aung San successfully negotiated a settlement with the strikers, though at considerable cost. The Communists controlled the All-Burma TUC and sought to exploit the strike situation. The Working Committee of AFPFL struck back: the Communists were expelled. Aung San had to prove that he was just as strongly opposed to imperialism. Within four weeks of taking office the AFPFL on the Council pressed for wider powers.³⁵ When Rance informed Pethick-Lawrence of their demands the reply was a restatement of the position under the 1935 Government of Burma Act.³⁶ The Council pressed their case in a detailed memorandum by Tin Tut. They now had the service of one as familiar with the 1935 Act as any in the Burma Office. In effect he demanded that Burma's political advance should keep pace with that in India, where the Interim Government was functioning and a Constituent Assembly was due to be convened.

Rance insisted to Pethick-Lawrence: 'we cannot deal with the present situation piecemeal': he was putting together new proposals. The unhelpful response was 'do your best to put the brake on'.³⁷ The AFPFL countered with demands made public on 13 November: the British Government must announce before 31 January 1947 that Burma would be free within one year, and simultaneously the Executive Council must be recognized as a national government. Although the Burma Office disliked making concessions to

what they called 'a caucus with no electoral mandate', they advised the Cabinet that the situation was 'deteriorating rapidly' and recommended (following Rance's proposals) that a delegation from the Executive Council be invited to discussions in London. This was agreed in principle.³⁸ Rance transmitted the invitation informally and the reception in Council was favourable.³⁹ However, after further consideration the AFPFL told Rance that before they could agree to the delegation they required an announcement by HMG that the purpose of the visit was to prepare for an 'Interim Government with full powers', and that the forthcoming general election was not to restore the partial parliamentary set-up under the 1935 Act but to elect a Constituent Assembly 'for the whole of Burma'. This claim was justified because India had been given exactly similar terms. A worried Rance reviewed the demand with Aung San and Tin Tut. He told Pethick-Lawrence that just as the 'White Paper was out of date, so I also consider that the time for equivocation is past. In my opinion HMG must now be prepared to be definite or accept the consequences'. This was strong stuff: too strong for the Cabinet. They fell back on another stalling device: 'to frame a statement not perhaps as specific as that made to India'.⁴⁰

A more blunt appreciation of the gathering crisis was despatched by the GOC in C. Burma to the War Office. He reminded London that AFPFL 'having taken office, and taunted as traitors by Communists . . . must justify themselves . . . hence demands on HMG'. If there was a refusal, then AFPFL would resign, the police and other public services would strike, and there was 'chance of widespread rebellion'. If there was an embargo on the use of Indian troops, then his only resource was three weak British battalions. Massive British reinforcements would be required, including 'very considerable administrative tail'.⁴¹ Rance's comment was that if anything this estimate 'was on the low side'. While the Cabinet hesitated, the governor had to report 'the price has hardened': there were now 'more extensive demands'.⁴² When the India and Burma Committee met on 19 December 1946 they first listened to an appreciation from Field Marshal Montgomery. He informed them bleakly that if there was widespread rebellion in Burma 'the situation might require up to two [British] divisions; these did not exist'. The Cabinet were still reluctant to agree; several ministers supported A. V. Alexander in regretting that they had come under pressure: 'There was a danger that His Majesty's Government might find themselves in a humiliating position'. But gradually they all faced up to the inevitable: what was the point in 'attempting to hold the country for a period of years by force' when they were agreed on the eventual goal? 'If the principle of independence was sound for India it was also sound for Burma'.⁴³ They had left themselves no leeway. Parliament was to rise for Christmas next day, so Attlee had to make an announcement then. His statement effectively put paid to the White Paper. They would 'hasten forward the time when Burma shall realise her independence, either within or without the Commonwealth'. Churchill

expressed incredulity at this volte face, but he could only fume ineffectually at the prospect of giving up the territory which his father as Secretary of State for India had annexed in 1886.⁴⁴

Events now moved rapidly. The delegation to visit London, led by Aung San, would include Tin Tut, Ba Pe, Thakin Mya (Home Member), U Saw, and Ba Sein, formerly mentor of Aung San but now a minor rival. Except for their leader, aged thirty, all were men in middle age. The British negotiators were led by Attlee, with Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence, Lord Listowel (soon to take over as Secretary of State), and A. V. Alexander. They were joined by two of the postwar recruits, Arthur Bottomley and Christopher Mayhew. The talks lasted from 13 to 27 January, with ten formal sessions.⁴⁵ Each side began to trust the other and a degree of compromise appeared, though the concessions were mainly on the British side. A sticking point seemed to be the Burmese demand that the Frontier areas participate in the constitutional process while the Attlee team clung to the established position that the Frontier peoples were their special responsibility which could not be abandoned. Eventually agreement was reached on a basis approved by Rance: that a committee of enquiry equally representative of the plains Burmese and the hill peoples should ascertain what the latter wanted. A draft agreement was produced by Cripps with his customary skill in steering around difficult corners and a meeting to finalize the agreement was convened at 5.30 pm on Sunday evening, 26 January 1947.

The British expected this to be smooth going, but the Burmese tried to depart substantially from the agreed approach. The British dug their heels in. With unaccustomed bluntness Cripps stated 'unless agreed conclusions were reached there was no point in negotiating', and Attlee added: 'Until this point had been settled it was useless to consider any . . . amendments'. Surprised to find that this time raising the stakes did not work, the Burmese withdrew and returned announcing that they would endeavour to join in agreed conclusions. The meeting dragged on, though now only details remained outstanding. Just as they were all through, and midnight was approaching, U Saw and Ba Sein broke their previous silence to repudiate the agreement. 'United Kingdom Ministers expressed their astonishment'—they had all along been led to believe the delegation were in accord. Cripps told Saw contemptuously that 'He wished to accept the benefit of the agreement without the responsibility for it'. Aung San exclaimed scornfully: 'Let them resign and say they do not agree with the final statement and do not accept any responsibility for it'. By this act the two dissidents excluded themselves from any political future in the new situation.

Next day Attlee and Aung San formally appended their signatures to the 'Conclusions'. Burma had taken a massive stride towards independence.⁴⁶ Although Pethick-Lawrence assured Wavell that these changes did not 'put the Interim Government of Burma in any way in advance of the Indian Interim Government, which might be embarrassing for you' this was not the

reality.⁴⁷ In India, the question of unity or partition was still quite undecided: in Burma the 'early unification' of plains Burma with the Frontier areas was now 'the agreed objective'. And whereas in India the Viceroy was to preside over the meetings of the Interim Government right up to the transfer of power, henceforth in Burma the governor would only be present at meetings involving his special powers, such as the manner of the phasing out of the Secretary of State's services. On all other occasions, Aung San was in charge. Effectively, power had been transferred. All that remained was to legitimize this by Treaty and Act of Parliament.

The London negotiations had continued longer than watchful spectators in Burma expected, and some misinterpreted this as meaning there was no progress. The Communists accused AFPFL of a sell-out, and organized a mob invasion of the Secretariat. As a form of reply, AFPFL under the direction of Thakin Nu, acting as Aung San's locum, embarked on strikes among workers in public utilities in Rangoon (though not among the police) and in a few remote places up country there were armed outbreaks where local leaders assumed the Freedom Struggle had begun. It was all an indication of how close to the abyss they had come.

The return of Aung San bearing the news that independence was now assured had a calming effect. Among the Frontier leaders the more shrewd and realistic quickly grasped that there was a new game to be played. Within ten days of the delegation's return a conference was held at Panglong in the Shan States where the leaders of the Shans, Kachins and Chins made a deal with Aung San. They would be represented on the Executive Council by their own Counsellor (Shan) assisted by two Deputy Counsellors (Kachin and Chin). An autonomous Shan state would be formed and also a new Kachin State, within a unified Burma.⁴⁸ This agreement was not recognized by the Karens, the largest indigenous minority, whose spokesmen were hopelessly divided over their prospects in the new, unfamiliar AFPFL-dominated politics. Most wanted a separate state, but this was difficult as only one-third of them lived in the hills: the majority dwelt in the Delta surrounded by the Burmese population. No Karen had accompanied the mission to London though two members of the community were members of the Executive Council. A sense of resentment against both Burmese and British began to possess them.

Aung San realized that if he was to succeed in attaining his objective of an independent, unified Burma he must keep ahead, maintaining the initiative he had won. The Karens were restive; the Communists were a menace. There were armed men everywhere.

The next hurdle to be cleared was the general election, held on 9/10 April. The pre-war parties realized the futility of trying to compete. Only the Communists contested the elections on a party basis, and although they commanded solid support in the rural areas of central Burma they were successful only in three of the 91 general constituencies: otherwise it was a

clean sweep for AFPFL. The main Karen organizations boycotted the election, thus providing a walkover for the minority of Karens who adhered to AFPFL. Assured of the support of 204 of the 210 elected members of the Constituent Assembly, Aung San could go ahead with the immediate presentation of his proposed constitution.⁴⁹

Before then the Panglong Agreement had been processed (there is no more adequate term) by the Committee of Enquiry set up under the Attlee-Aung San agreement. The Committee went beyond their terms of reference as defined to recommend that Frontier leaders be chosen to take part in the Constituent Assembly. To speak for the hill peoples, 45 members were recruited. The Karens were represented on the Committee and gave evidence but with the confusion of purpose which attended all they did they failed to clarify their demands.⁵⁰

With everything falling into his hands, Aung San proceeded to tidy up the political scene before raising the curtain on the last act. Ba Pe, 63 years of age, the only old guard politician to have survived into the new era of mass politics, was dismissed from office. Aung San informed Attlee that he must announce a date for independence 'early in 1948'. Then he revealed details of the new constitution to an AFPFL Convention assembled in Jubilee Hall (named in honour of the old Queen). The form of the constitution came as a complete surprise to Sir Hubert Rance, while in London the Secretary of State learned about it from *The Times*. Indicating that Burma would be a republic, Aung San effectively gave notice that his country would leave the Commonwealth: for in May 1947 the notion of accommodating a state which did not accept the Crown as its head was beyond the constitutional considerations of Whitehall.⁵¹

Meanwhile, events in India were moving unexpectedly fast: on 3 June it was announced that the choice for separation was to be given to the Muslims, and soon after came the news that—because the Indian leaders accepted Dominion Status, at any rate for a period— independence would be granted in mid-August. Rance desperately tried to persuade the Burmese that they, too, should accept the Dominion Status formula as a means of moving faster. There was no response, apart from an ingenious suggestion that they might be a Dominion for a few weeks or months until the constitution had been ratified. Listowel rejected the proposition: 'It would make a laughing stock of Dominion Status and be unfair and discourteous to the [existing] Dominions'.⁵² Rance sensed they were all boxed in by out-of-date convention. If Burma left the Commonwealth, might not Ceylon, and eventually Malaya take the same course? 'The time seems ripe for a new conception of association within the Commonwealth not necessarily owing allegiance to the Crown, especially for those countries who have no ties of blood, culture, or religion.' He received no encouragement from London but he was permitted to repeat his ideas to Mountbatten and to Malcolm MacDonald, Governor-General of the Malayan Union. Mountbatten was too

occupied to respond but MacDonald sent a powerful plea to the Colonial Secretary supporting Rance, adding 'If British influence slips [in South East Asia] some other external influence will inevitably take its place'. This might be America, but it was more likely to be a Communist China.⁵³

The Burmese were determined to assert their position of parity with India by gaining some additional advantage. Thakin Nu, now President of the Constituent Assembly, was despatched to London on a goodwill mission.⁵⁴ Among the AFPFL leaders Nu had been the most suspicious of British intentions, but the response of the Labour leaders had changed his mind. Now, in conversation with Attlee he emphasized his desire for close relations, but he insisted that his government could not sell the idea of Dominion Status even to their own supporters: 'He therefore suggested that the British Labour Government should take the initiative in creating a political federation based on the integration of Socialist parties throughout the world'. Such a scheme might have been expected to appeal to a Socialist Prime Minister. Far from it: Attlee retorted: 'The proposal that a number of countries should be linked through the organisation of a single political party was a totalitarian concept and would not be regarded as desirable or feasible by His Majesty's Government'.

Nu was left to propose mainly cosmetic changes. Aung San should henceforth be recognized as Prime Minister and Members of the Executive Council as the Ministers of a Provisional Government. When Listowel referred these proposals rather doubtfully to Rance he replied in his commonsensical way: 'I must confess that I am unable to appreciate the objection to the phrase [Provisional Government] . . . Full power already rests with the Executive Council.'⁵⁵ Nu returned with some concessions to present.

The Attlee Cabinet conducted a postmortem on Burma's decision to leave the Commonwealth: they reached the comfortable conclusion that everything possible had been done. Cripps did suggest that the door be kept open by inserting a provision in the forthcoming treaty permitting Burma to apply for readmission to the Commonwealth within twelve months of independence. Even this modest innovation was not incorporated in the actual treaty.

All this while uneasy sounds were emanating from the Karen community, but apart from urging Nu to try hard for agreement neither the Cabinet nor the governor took any initiative. Three small Karen states (Karenni) had the same formal status as the Indian princely states. With an absence of realism soon to be replicated in India the Karen chiefs boycotted the Constituent Assembly, which of course progressed quite unconcerned.

On 19 July 1947 occurred the event which might have destroyed the realization of independence by constitutional means. Aung San and his deputy premier, Thakin Mya, his Shan Counsellor, his most loyal Karen colleague, together with five others, were shot as they were assembled in Council. Thankin Nu was also on the death list but his intended assassin found

himself unable to press the trigger. When gunned down, the Council were considering the arrest of U Saw who was known to be plotting violent action. Arrested later the same day, Saw was found with an ample stock of arms and ammunition, all drawn from British army depots on false police indents. Rumours of a British plan to kill Aung San and substitute U Saw began to circulate, even among responsible politicians. Rangoon was astir with private armies and the countryside was thick with weapons, Japanese and British, in the hands of self-styled freedom fighters, half bandit, half rebel. It was a highly explosive situation, defused by the prompt action of Rance. With no delay he asked Thakin Nu to form a new AFPFL government. Installed in office, Nu publicly repudiated rumours about British involvement in the assassinations, specially emphasizing the 'close understanding between HMG, HE the Governor, and the Burma Government'.⁵⁶ By the end of July the crisis had blown over, though many suspicions remained (and remain to this day).

One by one the landmarks signalling independence were reached. On 29 August a Defence Agreement was concluded between Britain and Burma.⁵⁷ On 24 September the Constitution was finally adopted by the Assembly at the end of its third sitting. Nu declared that Burma would be 'Leftist', dedicated to the welfare of the common people. He averred that 'we are now united', and that the various ethnic groups 'have shed the past and are becoming more united than ever before'.⁵⁸ It was a brave affirmation, but in truth the Karens were discontented, increasingly alienated from the government, while one section of the Communists (the so-called Red Flags) had already gone underground and their rivals, the White Flags, were only awaiting the best moment to revolt. Also, the PVO and certain of the former BNA army units, now deprived of their commander, Bogyoke Aung San, were increasingly flexing their muscles.

It was far too late for the British to influence developments. Almost all the British administrators and those in the police had already left the country. The few remaining British army units were packing up, as were their Indian army comrades. Best to keep up a brave face.

On 17 October a treaty was signed at 10 Downing Street by Attlee and Nu in the presence of Bevin, Cripps, and many others, British and Burmese. Article I read 'The Government of the United Kingdom recognises the Republic of the Union of Burma as a fully independent sovereign state'. This set the tone for the rest of the treaty.⁵⁹ Last of all, parliament endorsed the treaty through the Burma Independence Bill. Whereas the Conservatives had not opposed the India Bill—largely because of the Dominion Status formula—Churchill led his depleted followers into the opposition lobby on Burma. The Bill passed by 288 to 114 votes. The Liberals, and also three Conservatives supported the government and a number abstained, including R. A. Butler and Harold Macmillan.⁶⁰ Nothing now remained but the final obsequies. The astrologers selected 6 January 1948 as the most auspicious

day—then changed their minds and asked for 4 January, naming 0.420 hours as the moment when the new six star flag should be raised.⁶¹ (Later, when things went wrong, it was asserted that neither the timing nor the stellar pattern of the flag were properly calculated).

Sir Hubert Rance departed with dignity. The new state was launched (Dorothy Woodman was among those there). And Thakin Nu assumed his heavy burden with a humble sense of duty and a saving sense of humour.

* * *

This account has tried to demonstrate that the 'Transfer of Power' concept does not fit the realities of the British exit from Burma. Capitulation of power would be a more fitting term. Recent works by Kenneth Harris and Kenneth Morgan have sought to give legitimacy to the version popularized at the time—that the Attlee government carried out a carefully planned programme of decolonization.⁶² The reality seems to be that Labour did accept the early attainment by India of full self-government (though far too long underestimating the problem of Pakistan). The plan for Burma, Ceylon and Palestine envisaged a much less compressed timetable. Labour's leaders still accepted the Burkean concept of trusteeship whereby a colonial people should be held in tutelage until they had demonstrated their political maturity. The new generation of Burmese leaders, like the Jewish leaders in Palestine, blew Labour's programme apart.

We may argue about exactly when the Burmese took over: one of the most perceptive of the British administrators involved asserts that Britain surrendered power at the end of September 1946, fifteen months before the formal withdrawal.⁶³ Definitely, in the wake of the London talks the British capability to control events expired: 6 March 1947, when W. I. J. Wallace the last British Chief Secretary handed over to U Ka Si, marks the date beyond which even the governor had only as much knowledge of what was about to happen as the AFPFL leaders chose to tell him.

If these were the circumstances, how do they affect our assessment of the chief actors in the drama? What of Attlee, whose posthumous reputation, like his performance in government, appears to maintain a steady level. We must acknowledge that while he cautiously waited on events he did not hang back beyond the point of recovery. Even though he finally accepted the inevitability of speeding up Burma's constitutional progress ahead of the 1945 White Paper programme only twenty-four hours before his momentous announcement of 20 December he did decide, like the competent chairman he was, just in the nick of time. He got it right in the end. That is what matters in politics: and matters to the historians.

What do we say of Aung San, the country boy who had a rendezvous with fate, a rendezvous with death. He did not choose any particular route to gain his country's independence: whether as student activist, conspirator, strutting Japanese general, spell-binder of the masses, tough across-the-table

negotiator, and finally martyr, he symbolized the Burmese revolution. Forty years after his death he remains the most potent force in his country's political mythology.

What an oddly matched couple Attlee and Aung San were! The one defusing the most awesome confrontation of all its drama: the other injecting an atmosphere of menace and intensity to almost every encounter. It was not surprising that he made the running and secured his objective over apparently improbable odds. Yet history (or so it seems to this observer) prefers the ordinary to the extraordinary. Attlee has been awarded his slot in history as the man who 'gave' India and Burma their independence, and outside Burma is far more widely remembered than the man who wrested independence from him.

Notes

This is the text of the Kingsley Martin Memorial Lecture given on 6 November 1985.

- 1 Arrangements for the inclusion of a detachment of the Burma National Army on the parade, and the attendance of Aung San were made in signals between Mountbatten and his British commanders. They are included in the voluminous SEAC papers located at the PRO in various series collectively identified as WO 203. Those reproduced in this paper are all from *Burma: the Struggle for Independence, 1944-1948: Documents from Official and Private Sources*, ed. Hugh Tinker, (2 vols, HMSO, 1983/84). Besides series in the PRO, the sources used were in the Burma series in the India Office Records, as well as the Mountbatten papers in the Broadlands Archive. A few documents came from other sources. The exact location of each document is indicated in *Burma: the Struggle for Independence* (hereafter cited as *Struggle*), and the reader is asked to refer to this work from where he can locate the original documents. Vol. I of *Struggle* is subtitled 'From Military Occupation to Civil Government, 1 January 1944 to 31 August 1946': this first note relates to vol. 1, p. 319.
- 2 *Struggle*, vol. 1, pp. 331-4.
- 3 Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten: The Official Biography* (Collins, London, 1985): see pp. 51-2, 314-15, also Leslie Glass, *The Changing of Kings: Memories of Burma, 1934-1949* (London, 1985), p. 185.
- 4 *Struggle*, vol. 1, pp. 311-13, also p. 335.
- 5 *Burma: Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government, May 1945*. Cmd. 6635, in *Struggle*, vol. 1, pp. 262-4. The wartime Coalition was dissolved on 23 May 1945.
- 6 *Struggle*, vol. 1, pp. 258-9.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 291-7.
- 8 The official version of the Cumberland meeting is in *ibid.*, pp. 339-40, and Dorman-Smith's own version on pp. 345-52.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 363-5.
- 10 *Ibid.*, see pp. 380-1.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 381, also pp. 384-5; 'Aung San is the most important figure in Burma today' (Dorman-Smith to L. S. Amery, 25 July 1945: his last letter to the outgoing Secretary of State).
- 12 Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, pp. 299, 312. See also *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia, 1943-45*, HMSO, 1951, B, Strategy and Operations, May to September 1945, paras 634-6.

- 13 *Struggle*, vol. I, pp. 398–401, and 408–10. This came to be known as the Naythuyein Mass Meeting.
- 14 The Kandy Conference is reported at length in *Struggle*, vol. I, pp. 432–56. Slim's pithy comment is on p. 433.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 456–9.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 479.
- 17 Dorman-Smith reported the breakdown of negotiations with AFPFL and the decision to select his Council from the old guard on 27 October, *ibid.*, pp. 522–5.
- 18 Communications from governor, 7 and 14 November (*Struggle*, vol. I, pp. 531, 538–9), permission to go ahead given by Cabinet, 19 November (pp. 548–9).
- 19 For the situation in Java, see *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia, Post Surrender Tasks* (HMSO, 1969), paras 50–79. By mid-December, British Indian forces had suffered over 1,000 casualties. See also Louis Allen, *The End of the War in Asia* (London, 1976), p. 93.
- 20 Minutes of Inter-Command Conference, 7 November, *Struggle*, vol I, pp. 531–3.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 608 (20 January 1946).
- 22 Presidential Speech, 20 January, *ibid.*, pp. 608–13; for the governor's assessment of numbers, etc, see *ibid.*, pp. 624–5.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 676–8, statement published 9 March: Aung San explained why he joined the Communist Party and why he left when he disagreed with Thakin Soe and his 'sectarianism'.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 694.
- 25 C.f. Conference at Government House, 27 March (*ibid.*, pp. 703–6) and advice by Chief Secretary, 30 March: 'Whether we like it or not the prosecution of Aung San for murder is off' (*ibid.*, p. 716).
- 26 Petition dated 8 April (*ibid.*, p. 728) and telegram from governor, 13 April (*ibid.*, pp. 731–2).
- 27 Governor to Prime Minister, telegram dated 6 May (*ibid.*, pp. 769–70).
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 773 (telegram dated 7 May).
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 783 (telegram dated 11 May).
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 799. An inquiry by British officials and Burmese politicians disagreed over who provoked the firing: see *Struggle*, Vol. II, pp. 515–18.
- 31 For Governor Knight's ingenious solution, see *Struggle*, Vol. I, pp. 895–6.
- 32 Rance was kept waiting, expecting the offer, from about 11 to 27 July. The War Office commendations are in *ibid.*, p. 897, n 1.
- 33 'Line of Policy for Sir H. Rance as Governor of Burma', circulated to Cabinet, 29 August (*ibid.*, pp. 970–2).
- 34 Private letter in *Struggle*, vol. II, 'From General Strike to Independence, 31 August 1946 to 4 January 1948', pp. 6–7.
- 35 Text of statement (handed to governor 23 October), *Struggle* vol. II, pp. 94–7.
- 36 Telegram dated 5 November, *ibid.*, pp. 113–14.
- 37 Rance to Pethick-Lawrence, 8 November, *ibid.*, pp. 129–30. Pethick-Lawrence to Rance, 9 November, *ibid.*, 131–2.
- 38 Note by Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, 16 November ('caucus'), *ibid.*, p. 147, and Memorandum to Cabinet, 22 November ('deteriorating'), *ibid.*, pp. 153–7. Acceptance of delegation proposal signalled, 26 November (*ibid.*, pp. 163–4).
- 39 Transmitted by Rance as received, 5 December, *ibid.*, p. 174.
- 40 Telegram, Rance to Pethick-Lawrence, 7 December, *ibid.*, 175–7; seen by Attlee, 8 December; Cabinet agree to temporize, at meeting, 10 December, *ibid.*, pp. 182–3.
- 41 GOC Burma to War Office, 13 December, *ibid.*, pp. 189–90.
- 42 Rance to Pethick-Lawrence, 18 December, *ibid.*, pp. 201–3.

- 43 India and Burma Committee of Cabinet, 19 December, 10 a.m. *ibid.*, pp. 203–6, Cabinet Meeting, 11 a.m., *ibid.*, pp. 206–7.
- 44 H.C. Debs, vol. 431, cols 2343–5, in *ibid.*, pp. 209–10.
- 45 The Burma Conversations, together with memoranda exchanged between the two sides, are reproduced in detail in *Struggle*, vol. 11, pp. 257–354.
- 46 The Sunday evening meeting extended into two sessions (recorded as 8th and 9th Meetings), *ibid.*, pp. 361–72. The 10th meeting next morning was a formality to witness the signing of the 'Conclusions' by Attlee and Aung San, *ibid.*, pp. 376–7. This was issued as a White Paper, Cmd. 7029, *ibid.*, 378–82.
- 47 Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, telegram 27 January 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 377–8.
- 48 Text of Panglong Agreement, with signatories, *ibid.*, pp. 404–5.
- 49 Analysis of the election results is given in *ibid.*, appendix, pp. 919–21.
- 50 Report of the Frontier Areas Enquiry Committee (signed 24 April 1947), *ibid.*, pp. 483–90. An emergency Karen Congress passed resolutions on 26 April (*ibid.*, pp. 494) and thereafter a steady stream of Karen statements appeared, e.g. 6 May, *ibid.*, p. 512.
- 51 Aung San to Attlee, 13 May, *ibid.*, pp. 519–20. Draft constitution, adopted by AFPFL Convention, 20–23 May, details, *ibid.*, pp. 527–9. See also *The Times*, 20 May 1947, 'A Republic for Burma'.
- 52 Listowel to Rance, telegram 7 June, *Struggle*, vol. II, pp. 566–8 (Listowel took over from Pethick-Lawrence as Secretary of State on 23 April 1947).
- 53 Rance to Listowel, telegram, 9 June ('time seems ripe'), *ibid.*, pp. 574–5; Rance to Mountbatten, 11 June, *ibid.*, pp. 581–2; Mountbatten to Rance, 12 June, *ibid.*, pp. 584–5; Malcolm MacDonald to Creech Jones, 26 June, *ibid.*, pp. 615–18.
- 54 Burma Goodwill Mission, 1st Meeting, 25 June, *ibid.*, pp. 607–10.
- 55 Rance to Listowel, telegram, 29 June, *ibid.*, pp. 631–2.
- 56 Press Communiqué issued by Council of Ministers, 25 July, *ibid.*, p. 685.
- 57 Britain–Burma Defence Agreement, text in *ibid.*, pp. 734–6.
- 58 Constitution of the Union of Burma (Extracts), *ibid.*, pp. 759–67; Nu's speech, 26 September, *ibid.*, 769–71.
- 59 Treaty Between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Provisional Government of Burma, text, *ibid.*, pp. 794–8.
- 60 H.C. Debs, vol. 443, cols 1836–1960.
- 61 Tin Tut to Laithwaite, telegram, 4 November, notifying new auspicious date, in *Struggle* vol. II, pp. 806–7.
- 62 Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London, 1982) devotes a chapter to Burma and India. The Burma section (pp. 355–62) contains numerous errors; the most egregious being to refer to Aung San as 'Aung Sang' throughout. His verdict—'From start to finish he [Attlee] moved steadily and unshakably, coolly and adroitly, according to his plan' (p. 386)—bears only a limited resemblance to the reality. Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945–1951* (Oxford, 1984), reviews the process of decolonization very briefly. He observes that the record in India was 'a kind of triumph' (p. 218) but his only reference to Burma is as follows: Labour was 'morally committed to speed up the process of independence for India and perhaps for Burma and Ceylon as well' (p. 219). One cannot quarrel with that.
- 63 *Struggle*, vol. I, personal memoir by F.S.V. Donnison, Chief Secretary February–November 1946: see specially p. 1010.

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MALAYA

NOTES

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MALAYA

B. R. Pearn

Source: F. C. Jones, Hugh Borton and B. R. Pearn, *Survey of International Affairs 1939-46*, vol. 7, *The Far East 1942-46*, London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1955), pp. 292-301.

On 3 September 1945 Admiral Sir Arthur Power, Commander-in-Chief of the British East Indies Fleet, arrived off Singapore in H.M.S. *Cleopatra*, and on the same day a detachment of Royal Marines landed at Penang after the signing in H.M.S. *Nelson* of a local surrender convention by the Japanese Commander in that area. General Sir P.A. Christison reached Singapore in H.M.S. *Sussex* on the following day, and, on behalf of South-East Asia Command, signed an agreement with General Itagaki for the occupation of the city. British and British-Indian forces landed on the 5th, amid scenes of great enthusiasm, especially on the part of the Chinese population, who had suffered so severely at Japanese hands.

The Japanese forces were at once disarmed and set to clearing away bomb damage, though, outside the dock area, the city had escaped lightly and the public utility services were still working. Additional naval and military forces arrived at Singapore on 10 September, and on the same day detachments were landed at Port Swettenham and Port Dickson, while others crossed the causeway from Singapore Island into Johore State. The official surrender of all Japanese forces in South-East Asia took place in the municipal buildings at Singapore on 12 September.

As in other parts of the South-East Asian theatre, the relief of prisoners of war and of civilian internees was one of the most pressing duties of the Allied forces. Only second to this in urgency was the rehabilitation of Malaya's economy; and steps were promptly taken by the military administration to revive the production and export of essential commodities, particularly rubber and tin. In August 1945 the British Ministry of Supply and the Colonial Office, together with representatives of the interested concerns, had formed a group of experts in the rubber, tin, and copra industries, to organize the purchase of available stocks and to arrange for the rehabilitation of these industries, so far as minor undertakings were affected, while a Malayan

Estate Owners' Company had been formed to carry out similar tasks in respect of estates with an acreage of more than 100 acres. As a result of these efforts some 25,000 tons of rubber had been shipped from Malaya by the end of November 1945. Difficulties arose, however, over the price of rubber. On 28 January 1946 it was announced that the United States Government would purchase all rubber allocated to it by the Combined Raw Materials Board, or the Combined Rubber Committee, at 20¼ cents a pound; but a meeting of rubber growers held at Kuala Lumpur protested that so low a price in relation to a rapidly rising scale of prices would make it impossible for them to pay reasonable wages and to rehabilitate the estates; the growers demanded a price equivalent to that paid in Ceylon of 1s. 6d. a pound. Subsequently, on 20 June 1946 a new international rubber agreement fixed the price for the period 1 July to 31 December 1946 at 1s. 2d. a pound.

In regard to tin, inspections carried out by experts showed that, of 126 dredgers at work in 1941, forty-one were in a condition which would enable them to be operating by August 1946, forty-six more ought to be available in June 1947, and seventeen more by January 1948. Seventy per cent. of the former labour force was available, and the electric power plants were more or less in working order. It was hoped that 12,300 tons would be produced in 1946, 46,150 tons in 1947, 72,000 tons in 1948, and 73,000 tons, or 90 per cent. of pre-war production, in 1949.

The task of rehabilitating Malaya's economy was carried out in uneasy political conditions. The shock of the Japanese conquest had stimulated the development of a political consciousness among the Malays to a degree previously unknown, and, besides this, the whole position of the Chinese community had changed. During the war the resistance movement, apart from a small group of Malays in Pahang, had been essentially a Chinese affair. Many Malays seem at first to have welcomed the Japanese in the hope that they would put an end to the economic domination of Malaya by the Chinese, and though disillusionment soon followed, the Japanese found it feasible, nevertheless, to employ the Malayan police force against the resistance movement. Thus relations between Chinese and Malays had deteriorated. Moreover, the leadership of the Chinese community had passed from the old-established, well-to-do Chinese families into the hands of the Left Wing, for the wealthier Chinese had had perforce to pay lip service to the Japanese cause, or at least to retire discreetly into the background, as their only hope of preserving either life or property. The way had thus been clear for the Left Wing to come to the fore, and the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army and the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union, which supported it, had been dominated by the Chinese Communists, whose avowed intention was to establish a Malayan Republic in Chinese hands. The Communists had thus gained the prestige of having been active in a successful resistance movement. They also profited by the long tradition of revolutionary activity among the Overseas Chinese in Malaya, for Malaya had been a

Chinese centre of such activity in earlier days when, before the establishment of the Chinese Republic, it had been impossible to take revolutionary action in China itself; and this tradition had been maintained first by the Kuomintang and later by the Communists. Malaya was, in fact, traditionally the home of Chinese revolutionary movements.

Thus when the Japanese in Malaya had surrendered, the Communists in the Anti-Japanese Army had hoped to secure control of Malaya and had, it would seem, been disappointed to see the reoccupation carried out by British forces and not by a Chinese army. They did not, however, abandon their hopes, and, taking advantage of the very serious shortages of food and consumer goods from which Malaya was suffering, they made every effort to arouse discontent. The food situation was serious in the extreme, and it showed no sign of improvement: even in August 1946 the authorities found it necessary to reduce the rice ration in Malaya from six to four ounces a day for men and from four and a half to three ounces a day for women, whereas, before the war, the average consumption of rice for men in Malaya had been between twelve and sixteen ounces. As early as October 1945 there were riots in Perak arising from an agitation about the price of rice, and in other areas also force had to be used by the military administration to suppress similar disorders.

There were serious clashes as well between Chinese and Malays owing to the deterioration in the relations between the two races, and these disorders went on till March 1946. It is probable that the presence of a large military force was the only thing that prevented extensive disturbances of this nature, which in pre-war days had scarcely been known.

A problem was presented also by the question of the disposal of the Anti-Japanese Army. Many of its members were little more than youths, who had lived during the war by exacting necessary supplies from the civil population and who were inclined to continue such practices, with the result that they got into trouble with the British military administration. Moreover, many bandits had seized the opportunity afforded by the war to disguise their depredations under the cloak of pretending to aid the resistance movement, and these continued their depredations. The recognized members of the Anti-Japanese Army were paid off in December 1945, and their arms were handed in to the authorities; but numerous illicit weapons remained in the hands of unrecognized guerrillas. Thus Malaya found herself afflicted with the lawlessness that is apt, in most countries, to persist after a period of war.

The Communists professed a willingness to co-operate with the military administration, but in fact they used the General Labour Union, which was predominantly Chinese and Communist in its membership, in an endeavour to paralyse the machinery of government. As early as October 1945 there was a strike at the collieries of Batu Arang, in Selangor, and, after a further series of minor strikes, a general strike was called on 29 January 1946 in Singapore and in certain Malay States. This came to little, and an attempt

was then made to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of Singapore in 1942 by holding a mass rally in the city on 15 February as a means of recalling the British defeat. The authorities forbade the demonstration, and an attempt to hold it was firmly suppressed.

The firmness of the British authorities on this occasion, and the 'loss of face' suffered by the Communists, weakened the influence of the Left Wing; and, finding that overt action by way of strikes and demonstrations had failed, they were forced to recast their plans and meanwhile to refrain from activity.¹ Moreover, at this stage public attention was diverted to a new theme, that of the constitutional future of Malaya.

Before the war the administrative organization in Malaya had been highly complex. Malaya had comprised, first, the Colony of the Straits Settlements, i.e. the Island of Singapore, Penang together with Province Wellesley, Malacca, the Island of Labuan off North Borneo, Christmas Island, and the Cocos or Keeling Islands; secondly, the Federated Malay States, consisting of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang; and, thirdly, the Unfederated Malay States, consisting of Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Perlis. The Colony of the Straits Settlements had been under direct British administration, whereas the various States had been British-protected territory and British authority there had rested on a number of agreements concluded with the rulers, whereby the ruler in each State retained his sovereignty but was bound to accept British advice in all matters except those touching the Muslim religion and Malay custom. The Governor of the Straits Settlements was also High Commissioner for the States, exercising his authority as High Commissioner in the Federated States through the Federal Secretary at Kuala Lumpur and the British Resident in each State, and in the Unfederated States through the British Advisers, of whom there was one stationed in each State. Though the personal union of the two posts of Governor and High Commissioner was thus a co-ordinating factor to some extent, the holder of the posts shared his authority with a number of different administrations and also with a number of different legislative bodies. For example, the Colony had a Legislative Council, while each State had its own State Council and, for the Federated States, there was a Federal Council also. Uniformity of policy was thus not easy to achieve.

This complex system of government had been found to be administratively inefficient and inconvenient, it had proved disadvantageous during the military operations of 1941-2, and it was also considered by the British Government to be altogether unsuitable for the situation in which Malaya was likely to be found after the expulsion of the Japanese. A co-ordination of control and of effort was felt to be necessary for coping with the problem of restoring Malaya's economy and for developing Malayan social services, and a simplification of the government of Malaya was therefore aimed at in London. Moreover, if any progress was to be made in Malaya towards self-government in democratic terms, the prewar system

of government would have to be substantially modified on that account as well.

The policy of the British Government was therefore to seek a revision of the various agreements with the rulers in order to terminate the protectorates and bring the States under the jurisdiction of the Crown. This would open the way for constitutional reform; and it was proposed, as a next step, to bring the States, both Federated and Unfederated, together with Penang and Malacca, into a Malayan Union, while keeping Singapore apart as a separate British Colony. Singapore was a centre of the entrepôt trade and of communications, and it was far more Chinese than Malay in its population. It was therefore regarded as having separate interests, especially in the fiscal sphere, from those of the peninsula of Malaya, and, according to the British Government's plans, an administrative separation was therefore to be maintained, though a fusion of Singapore with the Union was not ruled out as an ultimate objective. Meanwhile, Singapore, together with Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands, was to become the Colony of Singapore under its own Governor and Executive and Legislative Councils, while the Malayan Union, which was to be composed of the States and the remaining Straits Settlements, was to have a separate Governor and Council. In each State or Settlement, there would also be a local Council, with powers delegated to it by the central authority of the Union, and with an unspecified proportion of non-official members. In addition, in each State the ruler was to preside over a Malay Advisory Council, appointed by himself with the approval of the Governor, to advise him on matters affecting the Muslim religion and on any other matters referred to it by the Resident Commissioner with the Governor's approval. Each ruler, assisted by this local Malay Council, was to have legislative authority in his State in respect of religious matters, but such legislation was to require the approval of a Council of Sultans, with the Governor as President. Arrangements were to be made to attain co-ordination between the Union and the Colony in matters of common interest, such as higher education, immigration, currency, and communication, by the appointment of a Governor-General, who was not to exercise direct administrative functions but was to have a power of direction.

A further proposal related to the difficult subject of citizenship. By the end of the war the number of Chinese in Malaya exceeded the number of Malays. The Census of 1947 was to show that, in the Colony of Singapore and the Malayan Union together, a total population of 5,808,000 included some 2,615,000 Chinese and only 2,513,000 Malays. Thus the Chinese had come to be the most numerous community in the country, and many of the Chinese were not British nationals. The Census showed only 690,083 Chinese who were British nationals, in virtue of their having been born in the Straits Settlements; for any Chinese born in the States were regarded as British Protected Persons. So far the Chinese in the States had suffered no serious disability from their status, in spite of their not possessing either British or

Malayan nationality; but, upon the introduction of a more modern system of government, their lack of citizenship would have the effect of excluding them from participation in public life. Another difficulty arising from the position of the Malayan Chinese was their tendency to look to China as their homeland rather than to identify themselves with the interests of Malaya. No doubt the old-established families of Straits-born Chinese had their hearts in Malaya; but the majority of the Chinese in Malaya were immigrants or the children of immigrants, and, for these, their loyalty to the Chinese Republic came first. It was therefore desirable to find a means whereby the Chinese could play a part in the public life of Malaya proportionate to their numbers and their economic importance and would so come, it was hoped, ultimately to regard Malaya as their home and as the country of their allegiance. For these reasons it was proposed to establish a Malayan Union citizenship, which would be acquired by persons born, or to be born, in the Union or the Colony, and also by those who had, at the date of the creation of the citizenship, been ordinarily resident in these territories for ten of the preceding fifteen years, disregarding the period of the Japanese occupation. Union citizenship was also to be obtainable on application by anyone born outside the territories after the date of the establishment of such citizenship, if his father was a Union citizen. Naturalization might be granted to anyone who, after a total of five years' residence, intended to make Malaya his home, subject in such cases to possession of an adequate knowledge of English or Malay.²

To implement these proposals, the first step needed was a revision of the agreements with the rulers, and this was undertaken by Sir Harold MacMichael, who visited the States between October 1945 and January 1946. In certain States measures had first to be taken to regularize the succession. In Selangor the Japanese had deposed the Sultan and installed his elder brother; this pretender was removed in September 1945. In Kedah the Sultan had died in 1943 and the Japanese had recognized as successor the Regent who had been in charge since 1938; the latter was confirmed by the reinstated British authorities. In Perlis the Sultan had also died in 1943 and the Japanese had disregarded the claims of the lawful successor, but, after the return of the British, the lawful successor was duly installed by the State Council. In Kelantan the Sultan had died in 1944, and the Siamese, who had obtained control of the State, had installed the heir-apparent; the latter was also recognized by the British after their return. In Trengganu the Sultan had died in 1942 and the Japanese had installed his son, but on the defeat of the Japanese the latter was displaced in favour of his uncle.

Sir Harold MacMichael interviewed each ruler in turn and obtained from him an agreement that the British Crown should have full power and jurisdiction within the State. MacMichael's report was that 'every Ruler and every responsible Councillor whom we met left me with the impression that he was finally and genuinely convinced that the new policy was a wise and

just one, calculated to serve the long-term interests of the country as a whole.³

On 29 January the appointments were announced of Malcolm MacDonald as Governor-General of the Malayan Union and the Colony of Singapore, of Sir Edward Gent as Governor of the Union, and of F. C. (later Sir Franklin) Gimson as Governor of Singapore. The Union and the Colony formally came into being on 1 April 1946, and on that day the military administration, which had been in force hitherto, was wound up.

By this time it had already become manifest, however, that there was widespread opposition to the new constitutional arrangements. None of the Sultans attended the ceremony at Kuala Lumpur when the Governor of the Union was installed; instead, a letter was sent, signed by every ruler except the Regent of Johore, stating that, while they did not wish to show disrespect to the King, they were not prepared to take any step prejudicial to the representations which were being made to the British Government against the formation of the Union. The Sultans took the view that they had not been given sufficient opportunity to consider the implications of the scheme. They had been presented with revised agreements and had been required to accept them without reservations; and in their view an undue pressure, even in some cases amounting to a threat of deposition, had been applied. There was also opposition from others besides the rulers. For the first time political groups appeared among the Malays, and the most important of these, the newly formed Pan Malayan Malay Congress, later called the United Malay Nationalist Organization, was brought into being with the express intention of opposing the Union. At a conference held at Kuala Lumpur under the leadership of Dato Onn bin Jaffar of Johore, a resolution was passed by the Organization protesting that the agreements with the rulers had not been executed in accord with the Constitutions, traditions, customs, and usages of the States, and were therefore null and void; that they had been executed without the knowledge of the States' subjects and therefore were contrary to democratic principle; and that they amounted to outright annexation and therefore were contrary to the principle of the sanctity of treaties.

It was reported at this period that the Sultans objected to the very title of Malayan Union, since it appeared to imply the destruction of the identity of the States, and that they also objected to the terms of the MacMichael agreements whereby the British Crown obtained 'full power and jurisdiction' within the States, because this seemed to them to leave them no remnant of their sovereignty except for authority in religious matters. The rulers' criticisms were supported by the objections of their subjects. The United Malay Nationalist Organization issued a statement on 16 April 1946 declaring that Malays were not opposed to the principle of union or to the principle of common citizenship; they realized the necessity for both; but they strongly disapproved of the transfer of the sovereign rights of the States to the British Crown and called for the return of those rights and the restoration of the

States to their former status as protectorates within the British Commonwealth.⁴ Moreover, though this statement did accept the principle of common citizenship, it was well known that there was a widespread fear among the Malays that the proposals, as they stood, would lead to the domination of Malaya by the Chinese on the political as well as on the economic plane.

Malayan resistance was reinforced by agitation in the United Kingdom among Members of Parliament and former Colonial officials; and it became apparent that the proposals, as adopted, could not stand. Discussions were initiated between Sir Edward Gent and the rulers on 2 May 1946, and, when MacDonald arrived at Kuala Lumpur on 1 June, an improvement in the atmosphere was registered by the rulers' act in officially welcoming him. On the following day he held a discussion with them; and after subsequent talks it was announced, on 4 July, that proposals were under consideration for the substitution of a Malayan Federation for the Malayan Union and of a High Commissioner for the Governor. These British concessions on points of fundamental principle proved acceptable to the rulers. Further discussions were to take place on the question of citizenship, in respect of which the Order in Council necessary to implement the proposals had not yet been issued.

On 25 July 1946, after a further conference at Kuala Lumpur, it was announced that a working committee comprising representatives of the British administration, of the rulers, and of the United Malay Nationalist Organization, was to be set up to examine and report on the constitutional problem, and this committee met on 6 August. The committee, which sat at intervals from August to November, presented its report to a plenary conference on 20 November. The rulers and the Nationalist Organization expressed their approval of the report, and this was then forwarded to the British Government. The report accepted as fundamental principles the following:

- (a) that there should be a strong central government to ensure the economical and effective administration of all matters of importance to the welfare and progress of the country as a whole;
- (b) that the individuality of each of the Malay States and of the Settlements should be clearly expressed and maintained;
- (c) that the new arrangements should, on a long view, offer the means and prospects of development in the direction of ultimate self-government;
- (d) that, with a view to the establishment of broad-based institutions, necessary for principle (c) to become effective, a common form of citizenship should be introduced which would enable political rights to be extended to all those who regard Malaya as their real home and as the object of their loyalty;
- (e) that, as these States are Malay States ruled by Your Highnesses, the subjects of Your Highnesses have no alternative allegiance, or other country which they can regard as their homeland, and they occupy a special position and possess rights which must be safeguarded.⁵

The Committee therefore proposed that a Federal form of Constitution should be adopted; but it was realized that all the interested communities in Malaya must be given an opportunity of expressing their views, and in December 1946 the Governor of the Union appointed a further consultative committee, representing non-Malays, to hold meetings throughout the peninsula, to collect evidence, and to report and recommend, in respect of both the constitutional problem and the problem of citizenship.

The year 1946 therefore ended without having seen these difficult issues yet finally determined, but with them well on the road to an agreed settlement. Meanwhile, the Malayan Union was still officially in existence, though it was obvious that it must shortly undergo a radical remodelling.

During this period, 1945-6, constitutional changes were carried out by the British Government in three other territories that were of interest to Malays. The British North Borneo Company ceded its rights to the Crown, and North Borneo became a Crown Colony, on 15 July 1946; the Island of Labuan, formerly part of the Straits Settlements, was incorporated in the new Colony; and the independent State of Sarawak likewise ceased to exist. The Rajah, Sir Charles Vyner Brooke, with the approval of the Council Negri of Sarawak, ceded his sovereign rights to the British Crown with effect from 1 July 1946, and Sarawak then became a British Crown Colony. The Rajah, in a message to his people on 6 February 1946, said of the impending change:

The members of the Supreme Council of State, and myself, rejoice that His Majesty's Government have intimated that my proposal to cede the State of Sarawak to His Majesty the King is acceptable. We delight to know that the exercise of any authority in the State, except that of His Majesty, will, hereafter, be determined. We believe that there lies in the future hope for my people in the prospect of an era of awakening, enlightenment, stability, and social progress, such as they have never had before. We regard the acceptance of the cession as the consummation of the hopes of the first Rajah of Sarawak.⁶

The cession was, however, unwelcome to some elements in the State, and the proposal met with resistance in the Council Negri, where the cession bill was carried by only 18 votes against 16 on the second reading and by 19 against 16 on the third reading. Of 26 non-European members, 14 were in favour and 12 against on the second reading, and 13 against and 12 in favour on the third reading. Thus the bill was carried by the votes of the European official bloc, and an anti-cession agitation continued thereafter to trouble the State.

There was some opposition in the United Kingdom also. Though it might be true that the welfare of the inhabitants of Sarawak would be better served by an acceptance of the status of a British Crown Colony, there was

inevitably some regret at the extinction of the Brooke dynasty and at the passing away of this survival of the romantic days when it had still been possible for the individual to carve out a kingdom for himself.

Notes

- 1 For these events see Victor Purcell: *The Chinese in Malaya* (Oxford University Press for Royal Institute of International Affairs and Institute of Pacific Relations, 1948), chapters xv and xvi.
- 2 See Great Britain, Colonial Office: *Malayan Union and Singapore: Statement of Policy on Future Constitution . . . January 1946*, Cmd. 6724 (London, H.M.S.O., 1946) and idem: *Summary of Proposed Constitutional Arrangements . . . March 1946*, Cmd. 6749 (London, H.M.S.O., 1946).
- 3 Great Britain, Colonial Office: *Report on a Mission to Malaya by Sir Harold MacMichael (October 1945–January 1946)*, Colonial no. 194 (London, H.M.S.O., 1946).
- 4 *The Times*, 17 April 1946.
- 5 Great Britain, Colonial Office: *Federation of Malaya: Summary of Revised Constitutional Proposals*, Cmd. 7171 (London, H.M.S.O., 1947), p. 3.
- 6 Quoted 6 February 1946, H.C. Deb. 5th ser., vol. 418, coll. 1729–30.

STATUS QUO FOR MALAYA

Raymond Kennedy

Source: *Far Eastern Survey* 15(2) (1946): 134-7.

In January 1946 the British Secretary of State for the Colonies presented to Parliament a "Statement of Policy on Future Constitution" of what is termed the "Malayan Union and Singapore." This area has been popularly known as Malaya or British Malaya; more technically it has comprised a Crown Colony, the Straits Settlements, and two clusters of "protected states", the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States.¹

General lines of reorganization

The new name for the area indicates the general lines of reorganization which are proposed. The Federated and Unfederated Malay States are to be combined in a "Malayan Union," to which will be transferred the Settlements of Penang and Malacca. The Settlement of Singapore will be separately constituted as the Colony of Singapore. Included in this colony will also be two isolated island territories which in the past have been appended to the Straits Settlements, namely, the Cocos-Keeling Islands and Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean to the south of Sumatra. Labuan, the fourth of the former Straits Settlements, is a little island off the coast of northern Borneo, and its disposition under the new plan will be noted below.

In broad outline, then, it is contemplated that Malaya will in the future consist of two rather than three governmental divisions, these two divisions to be known respectively as the Malayan Union and the Colony of Singapore. The status of the latter within the British Empire is clear: it will be a Crown Colony. But the "Statement of Policy" does not define the status of the Malayan Union as a member unit of the British Empire. The Nine States of Malaya will evidently continue to be "protected states," each with its own native ruler; but the Settlements of Penang and Malacca, which in the past have been constituent parts of the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements, have no native rulers and no native system of administration. What their

technical classification will be is not made clear in the Statement, any more than is the classification of the Malayan Union as a whole.

The Statement starts with a brief description of the previous position of the three component parts of Malaya, and then proceeds to a discussion of the need for reform. "A stage has now been reached," it is stated, "when the system of government should be simplified and reformed" so that Malaya may "be able to exercise an influence as a united and enlightened country appropriate to her economic and strategic importance." "Democratic progress" in the direction of "responsible self-government" is also given as a reason for reform whereby "all those who have made the country their homeland may have a due share in the country's political and cultural institutions."

"Democratic progress" but no vote

"Efficiency and democratic progress" are explicitly named as the goals of the new constitution. But as one reads the actual proposals for reform one searches in vain for any innovation which concerns "democratic progress." The words "elected," "election," "voting," and the like appear nowhere in the Statement of Policy. The entire plan is devised with a view solely to increased "efficiency" of administration, and once "democratic progress" has been mentioned in the preamble it does not reappear in the rest of the document.

The first of the concrete proposals is that henceforth the British Crown shall exercise supreme jurisdiction in all of the nine Malay States. In the past the native Ruler in each of the States has been sole sovereign, at least in a legal sense. Actually, the native Rulers have been compelled, by the terms of their various treaties with Great Britain, to act only upon the advice of the local British Resident or Adviser in all matters except those affecting Mohammedan religion. The degree of "indirect" control by the British representative has been slightly stronger in the Federated than in the Unfederated Malay States, and, aside from legal technicalities, the only real change involved in putting the States under Crown jurisdiction is to place all of them in an exactly identical status with respect to Great Britain, thus clearing the way for blanket legislation applying to all the States.

It is claimed in the Statement of Policy that Sir Harold MacMichael, His Majesty's Special Representative, concluded the Agreement which, supplanting the existing treaties, grants full jurisdiction in each State to His Majesty, "after consultations conducted with friendliness and goodwill." That no duress should be necessary is understandable, as the new arrangement will bring minor if any infringement on the former powers of the Rulers. One might have expected, however, some resistance on the point of dignity; but the events of recent years have probably shaken the Rulers and made them more receptive than they would have been before the war to a

legal trespass on their formal sovereignty. The Rulers of the Unfederated Malay States, having been the most "independent," stand to lose most under the new plan, and it may be worth noting that the deposition of the Sultan of Trengganu has been recently reported. The Sultan of Johore, whose actual powers have been greatest of all, was under suspicion of an undue degree of collaboration with the Japanese during the war, and this may have been a factor in softening his resistance to the Agreement.

Position of Singapore

The "special position" of Singapore is next treated in the Statement of Policy. This island, because of its "economic and social interests distinct from those of the mainland," it is asserted, "requires separate treatment." The separate treatment consists of making it a Crown Colony by itself, instead of leaving it, as it has been, a part of the former Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements, from which the other sections will be detached, namely, Penang, Malacca, and Labuan. Aside from this, no change is contemplated in Singapore's status. It will still be ruled by a Governor, an Executive Council, and a Legislative Council, the members of these councils being appointed, as in the past, by the Governor. The administration of Singapore City will have the same form as before, with a Municipal Commission, a Harbor Board, and the Singapore Improvement Trust.

The detachment of Singapore, main city and prosperous commercial center of Malaya, from the rest of the country will certainly stand in the way of the development of Malaya towards national maturity as an integrated, economically balanced state. Singapore, to be sure, is a very "un-Malay" district, with seventy-five percent of its population Chinese; there is no doubt, also, that its large-scale entrepôt trade, which is almost its exclusive economic activity, gives it a character utterly distinct from that of the raw-material producing mainland; but by the same token, although to a lesser degree, New York City might be detached administratively from New York State. The separation of Singapore might thus be viewed as a kind of political and economic decapitation of Malaya, similar to the separation in Ireland of the industrial "head" of Northern Ireland from the agricultural body of Eire. An intimation of possible future trouble on this score appears in the stipulation that "it is no part of the policy of His Majesty's Government to preclude or prejudice in any way the fusion of Singapore and the Malayan Union in a wider union at a later date should it be considered that such a course were desirable."

The part of the Statement of Policy dealing with the new Malayan Union offers only one major structural change from the previous situation in the Malay States. Whereas in the past only four of the States, the so-called Federated Malay States (Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang), have had a centralized administration, the new plan extends the federation

principle to the five formerly Unfederated Malay States (Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Perlis) as well. And, whereas the Federated Malay States have had but one central Federal Council, the new Union will have two, an Executive and a Legislative Council. This innovation seems to have little real significance, nor does the replacement of the former High Commissioner by a Governor as the principal British official. Under the old system, the Governor of the Straits Settlements was also High Commissioner to the Malay States; but probably the new Governor of Singapore will not at the same time fill the post of Governor of the Malayan Union.

The local representatives of the Governor in the States are to be called "Resident Commissioners." In the past the British representatives have had the title of "Resident" in the Federated Malay States and "Adviser" in the Unfederated Malay States. In effect they have been the real executive administrators of the States, for the native sultans have had to follow their advice on all matters except those pertaining to Mohammedan religion. The Residents and Advisers in their turn, of course, have been under the orders of the High Commissioner. Probably the new Resident Commissioners will exercise much the same function as the former Residents and Advisers, although with the centralization of authority in the new Union the individual States will have less of even the pretense of autonomy which they formerly enjoyed.

Change in legislative system

Functionally a fairly appreciable change will be made in the legislative system of the Malay States. Before the war uniformity of legislation for all of the States usually required separate action by ten legislatures: by the Federal Council and the four State Councils of the Federated Malay States and by the five State Councils of the Unfederated Malay States. In the future the Legislative Council of the Malayan Union will pass legislation affecting all of the states, and the State Councils will have only such powers of local administration and subsidiary legislation as may be delegated to them by the Union Council. The two "Settlement" members of the Union, Penang and Malacca, will also have local Councils, with the same restricted powers.

While legislation for the Malay States will be simplified in this way, all members of Councils will, as in the past, continue to be appointed. "No voting" will still be the watchword of Malayan politics. Official as well as unofficial representatives will be included in the Councils. Whether the principle of the Official majority, which ensures inevitable passage of all government-sponsored bills, will prevail in these Councils, is not explained in the Statement of Policy; rather, "the final determination of numbers and of the details of representation will not be decided until there has been consultation with local opinion." The Governor is to conduct these consultations, and it would be interesting to know what "local opinion" he will consult.

Each state will have a Malay Advisory Council, appointed and presided over by the Ruler, and the main power of these bodies will be to legislate on matters of Mohammedan religion, with the exception of tithes and taxes. Such legislation must be approved by the Governor; and to advise him on these questions he will be assisted by a Central Advisory Council of the Malay Rulers, of which he, the Governor, will be chairman. The shadow of secular power to be left to the native Rulers appears in connection with these Councils, as follows: (1) the Malay Advisory Council of each State may advise the Ruler on matters outside the Mohammedan religion, but only at the request of the British Resident Commissioner acting with the Governor's approval, and (2) the Central Advisory Council of the Malay Rulers may discuss other subjects than Mohammedan religion, but only with the Governor's consent. "By these arrangements," the British Statement concludes, with presumably unconscious irony, "it will be ensured that each of the Rulers can play his part not only in the affairs of his State but in the future development of Malaya as a whole."

Pan-Malayan policies

The reader next passes on to a section entitled "Subjects of Pan-Malayan Importance," in which the Singapore "head" becomes momentarily almost rejoined to the decapitated trunk of Malaya, but mainly for purposes of trade. Full identity of policy will be ensured by "common arrangement" between the Union and the Colony in matters of currency, income tax, civil aviation, posts and telegraph, shipping, immigration, and—of all things—higher education. "Other matters" may also be added to this list. Thus Singapore, while constituting a political entity, will be drawn into a "regional collaboration" on certain points.

A final major proposal affecting Malaya as a whole marks a rather radical departure from former conditions. In the past, persons born in the Straits Settlements have been regarded as British subjects, though not British citizens, while persons born in any of the Malay States became subjects of the State of their birth. Britishers born in either area, however, did not lose their British citizenship. Under the new plan the last reservation is retained, but henceforth any person born in the Malayan Union or Singapore will thereby acquire a previously non-existent status, that of "Malayan Union Citizenship." The effect of this can be shown by an example: formerly a Chinese born in the State of Selangor became a Selangorese subject; the new plan would make him a Malayan Union citizen. Persons not born in the Union or Singapore will become Union citizens if they have been resident in either area for ten years out of the fifteen preceding the adoption of the new Constitution. Finally, persons not born in Malaya may acquire Malayan Union citizenship after five years of residence in either Singapore or the Union.

Significance of new citizenship

The only immediate advantage of being a Union citizen is that without such status a person may not hold public office or membership in any Council. But in the future, if a voting system is ever introduced into Malaya, the principle of pan-Malayan citizenship precludes the establishment of communal voting, i.e., voting by racial or ethnic blocs, such as has prevailed in India, Burma, and Indonesia. This is a really important step in Malaya especially, because of the unusual division of the population on ethnic lines (approximately forty-two percent Malay, forty-two percent Chinese, fourteen percent Indian, and two percent mixed). It means, if voting is ever allowed in the country, that the Malays, who have always in the past had a monopoly of whatever scanty political power has been granted to non-Europeans, will have to compete politically on even terms with the Chinese. At present this does not threaten the Malays strongly, as only about thirty-five percent of the resident Chinese are Malaya-born; but the Chinese have been increasing faster than the Malays for many decades, both by immigration and by their higher birth rate, and more of the immigrants have been settling permanently in Malaya. Whatever the actual outcome, the new policy with respect to citizenship represents the first serious breach in the traditional principle of Malay preference in political matters.

The Statement of Policy ends with another noteworthy proposal. "His Majesty's Government have it in mind" to install a Governor-General over not only the Malayan Union and Singapore, but over all of the British parts of Borneo as well. The latter include the "protected states" of Sarawak, British North Borneo, and Brunei, and the former Straits Settlement of Labuan Island.² Inclusion of Sarawak and North Borneo, it is stated, must await the outcome of negotiations now in progress. These negotiations, according to recent reports, have been brought to a successful conclusion with respect to Sarawak. The functions of the Governor-General will be those of "co-ordination and direction," and he will also have power to "convene conferences on any subject," which would be attended by "British Governors and other British representatives."

The entire Statement of Policy has nothing at all to do with "democratic progress," unless the germ of an idea of future voting by the people of Malaya can be detected in the new proposal for a Malayan Union Citizenship. The plan is designed, in short, to simplify the governmental structure and thus render more efficient the colonial administration of Malaya.

Note

- 1 For a British view on the proposed constitution, see Victor Purcell, "A Malayan Union," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, March 1946, pp. 20-40. A description of the prewar status of Malaya may be found in Raymond Kennedy's "Malaya: Colony Without Plan," *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. XIV, No. 16, August 15, 1945, pp. 225-26.
- 2 See Raymond Kennedy, "Status of British Borneo," *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. XIV, No. 17, August 29, 1945, pp. 243-246.

A MALAYAN UNION: THE PROPOSED NEW CONSTITUTION

Victor Purcell

Source: *Pacific Affairs* 19(1) (1946): 20-40.

I. The background

The total area of Malaya is 50,880 square miles of which the Federated Malay States account for 27,540, the Unfederated Malay States for 22,080, and the Straits Settlements for 1,260. To express the matter more geographically and in relation to the proposed New Constitution, the Peninsula is 50,660 square miles, and the Island of Singapore is 220. The Straits Settlements comprise Singapore, Penang, and Malacca, and Labuan off the Coast of Borneo. The four Federated States are Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang, and the States outside the Federation are Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Perlis.¹

The first British Settlement was Penang, founded in 1786. In 1790 this Island was ceded by the Sultan of Kedah in perpetuity to the East India Company in return for an annual payment. A strip of the mainland, named Province Wellesley, was added in 1800. Singapore was founded in 1819 and a treaty was signed with the legitimate and *de facto* rulers of Johore, whereby the island was ceded in perpetuity to the East India Company in return for certain political pensions to the Johore ruling family. Penang was an uninhabited island, except for seasonal visits of fishermen, at the time of the British occupation, and Singapore in 1819 had a population of only 130 Malays living in a village overlooking the harbour. Malacca was occupied by British forces during the wars with the French but was finally obtained by the British from the Dutch in return for the settlement of Bencoolen in Sumatra.

In 1826 the Settlements were united under the East India Company. The population of the Settlements of Singapore and Penang in particular increased by leaps and bounds owing to the desire of Asiatics, especially the Chinese, to enjoy the protection of the British flag and the advantages of free

trade which had been established in the Straits Settlements through the influence of Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore. The Settlements became very prosperous, though their prosperity was threatened for many years by disorders in the hinterland. Piracy flourished and pirates, whose lairs were among the creeks and mangrove swamps of the West Coast of the Peninsula, lay in wait for junks and other shipping at the very entrance to Singapore harbour.

Trade with the Malay States was carried on almost exclusively by the Chinese domiciled in the Straits Settlements. Chinese, too, were engaged in tin mining in Perak where a discovery of new tin fields in the 1850's greatly increased the attractiveness of the State. The Malay States were now in a condition of decay, their boundaries were often indefinite, and they were frequently at war with one another. There was, moreover, often civil war in a State among rival claimants to the throne.

The Straits Settlements Chinese frequently petitioned the British Government to intervene to restore order to the Peninsula, but this for over fifty years after the foundation of Singapore the British refused to do. Eventually, however, an accumulation of abuses persuaded them to change their policy. Clashes between the Malay and Chinese miners of Larut and bloody faction fights among the latter, and a recrudescence of piracy along the coast were among the reasons for this change of policy.

In 1867 the Straits Settlements had been transferred² from the jurisdiction of the India Office—the East India Company had ceased to exist in 1858—to that of the Colonial Office. Upon the first Colonial Governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, devolved the responsibility for initiating the change of policy which had already been decided upon in London.

The first State to which the new policy was applied was Perak. British influence there had begun early in the nineteenth century. A treaty with Penang in 1818 secured to British subjects the right to free trade in the State. In 1826 the Sultan ceded the Dindings to the British as a base for operations for the suppression of piracy. (The Dindings were restored to Perak in 1935.) The occasion of British intervention was the disturbances above described. By the Treaty of Pangkor of January 1874, the Perak chiefs agreed to accept a British Resident whose advice should be "asked for and acted on upon all questions other than those of touching Malay religion and customs."

In Selangor anarchy prevailed and pirates ravaged the coastal trade. The Sultan's difficulties were such that he was glad to accept a British Resident in 1874, and Selangor was brought under the protection of Britain. Negri Sembilan ("the Nine States") came under British protection by stages—Sungei Ujong in 1874, Jelubu in 1883, Rembau in 1887. The modern Negri Sembilan was a confederation agreed upon by the Rulers of the several States and came into being in 1895.³

The Sultan of Pahang in 1888 applied for and obtained British protection and a Resident was appointed. In 1895 a treaty was signed by the Rulers of

the four States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang whereby they agreed to constitute their States into a Confederation to be known as the Federated Malay States. A British officer known as the Resident-General was appointed as subordinate to the Governor of the Straits Settlements who now became High Commissioner for the Federated Malay States.

British relations with Johore are regulated by a treaty of 1885 whereby the Maharaja was recognized as Sultan and promised protection, and by a further treaty in 1914 providing for the appointment of a British officer as General Adviser. The four northern States of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu were until 1909 under Siam, but by the Treaty of Bangkok of that year suzerainty over them was transferred to the British Crown and the States came under British protection. Treaties similar to those existing with the other States were negotiated with the four Rulers.

It had been hoped that the remaining States would join the Federation, but this did not come to pass. The reasons for this were several, but the fact that the Federated Malay States had tended to become a union rather than a federation, with a consequent diminution of the sovereign right of the Rulers, deterred the Rulers of the Unfederated States from joining it. As a measure of justice to the Rulers of the four constituent States, the Federated Malay States were decentralized in 1936, and the post of Chief Secretary (which had replaced that of Resident-General) was abolished. Instead a Federal Secretary, inferior in status to the four Residents, was appointed. The intention was to decentralize the States but at the same time to concentrate the departmental advisers of the two capitals of the whole country (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur) in the interests of Malayan coordination. In practice this design cannot be said to have been accomplished very satisfactorily for the States tended to be independent entities, though the structure of the Federation itself has been retained for convenience in handling matters of common concern to the four States.

So much is necessary for the understanding of the position as it existed at the moment of the Japanese invasion of 1941. It was obviously not in the interests of the consolidation of Malaya as a single country that ten separate governments should exist in a country much the same size as England or Florida. Moreover there were anomalies of citizenship which had, in the interests of Malayan unity, to be removed. The Malay States had now a large non-Malay population, but whilst the Malays were the subjects of their Sultans, and Indonesian Muslims who immigrated into Malaya were also recognized as such by the Malay Sultans, the non-Malays, of whom the Chinese were the most numerous, had an indeterminate status in law. Those, however, who were born in the Straits Settlements were British subjects.

Such were the problems occupying the attention of the Colonial Office at the outbreak of war in 1939. The liberation of Malaya from the Japanese was bound to precipitate the issues.

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Let us now consider in brief the results of British intervention in the Malay States. The boundaries of the States in 1874 were often disputed, the population was small (probably not more than 300,000, though no well-based estimate is available) and confined to the coasts and the banks of rivers; the system of government was feudal, to say the least of it; there were no roads, railways, hospitals, no courts of law, no public works or public buildings; there were no state finances apart from the personal incomes of the Rulers and their Chiefs. Under British protection the country began to be opened up, roads and railways were built, public works undertaken, and health schemes and education subsidized from the newly created revenues.⁴ Towards the end of the century foreign capital began to be attracted to Malaya, and the growth of the tin industry and the creation of the rubber industry by the British made Malaya a rich country. But in one respect British intervention upset the balance of Malay life. The Malays were not disposed by temperament to work on estates and mines (they were a race of peasant-proprietors), and labour had to be introduced from abroad. This was done with the acquiescence of the Rulers who saw the advantages to their State and personal revenues accruing from the development of the country. Indian (Tamil) labourers were brought in for the rubber estates; the Chinese arrived in even greater numbers to work in the tin mines and on estates, and to swell the urban population with its many trades. They rapidly became the richest of the communities. The Chinese labourers remitted annually great sums to China for the support of their families. (A third of the Chinese were Chinaborn and their ambition was to return to their "ancestral mountains" to die. They kept their families in China and their remittances supported them at a far higher standard than that of their stay-at-home neighbours.) Over \$110,000,000 (Malayan currency)⁵ was remitted from Malaya to China in 1941—though part of this was in the ordinary course of trade. The Tamils, too, though poorer than the Chinese, remitted many millions of dollars through the Savings Bank to their families in South India. They, too, were largely migrant, four years being their average stay in Malaya.

The Malays, though their numbers increased (from 1,438,000 in 1911 to 1,651,000 in 1921, to 1,962,000 in 1931 and to 2,279,000 in 1941) and though they shared directly and indirectly in the country's newly acquired wealth, were feeling the economic encroachment of the more enterprising immigrants, especially the Chinese. The interests of the Malay peasant were safeguarded by the setting aside of Malay land reservations which could not be alienated to non-Malays, but in spite of this and the preference given to Malays in the government service of the Malay States, the economic status of the native people of the country was relatively declining. The immigrants, at the same time, though appreciative of the opportunity to thrive, were not altogether satisfied with their indeterminate status and with their exclusion from the higher ranks of public employment.

The system of government in Malaya was complex but its essentials may be summarized for the purposes of this article.

The Straits Settlements had an Executive Council of 12 and a Legislative Council of 27. Both of these were presided over by the Governor. On the Legislative Council there was an official majority of one. The Governor, however, very rarely used his official majority, for measures were discussed with the interested parties before being introduced, and the traditional British spirit of compromise was allowed the fullest play. Of the 13 unofficial members 6 were Asiatics, of whom 4 were Chinese. In the Federated Malay States a Federal Council had existed since 1909 to legislate on matters of Federal import. The constitution of the Council was similar in principle to that of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements. Each Malay State had a State Council, presided over by the Ruler, and on many of these there were European, Chinese and Indian representatives as well as Malays, but not in proportion to the numerical strength of the communities. The State Councils legislated in matters specifically affecting their individual States.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the problem as it exists after the re-occupation, it is well to keep in mind the population figures:

<i>Racial Division</i>	<i>Population (thousands)</i>				<i>Percentage of total</i>		
	1911	1921	1931	1941	1921	1931	1941
Europeans (a)	11.1	15.0	17.8	31.4	0.4	0.4	0.6
Eurasians	10.9	12.6	16.0	19.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Malays (b)	1437.7	1651.0	1962.0	2278.6	49.2	44.7	41.0
Chinese	916.6	1174.8	1709.4	2379.2	35.0	39.0	43.0
Indians	267.2	471.7	624.0	744.2	14.0	14.2	14.0
Others	29.3	33.0	56.1	58.4	1.0	1.3	1.0
Total	2672.8	3358.1	4385.3	5511.5 (c)	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Including all white races.

(b) Including other indigeneous races of the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago.

(c) As given here, the components total 5511.1.

The 1941 figures are an estimate based on the formula: Census + Births - Deaths + Migration Surplus.

II. The problem

The question of the reform of the Malayan constitution had, as has been mentioned above, been occupying the attention of the Colonial Office even before the Japanese invasion. The world convulsion and the development of world opinion in the direction of self-determination and the grant of self-government to the dependencies of the Powers were bound to accelerate the process that was already in train. Yet the problem was more complicated than that of any other Colony or Protectorate because of the diversity of racial make-up in the population, the migratory nature of the greater part of it, and the existing treaty obligations to the Malay Rulers. As regards the

latter, since great numbers of Chinese and Indian immigrants had been introduced while the Malay States were under British protection, the Malays naturally conceived it the duty of the British to safeguard them from the further encroachments of alien races. The fact that they had not shown a disposition to meet the newcomers on their own ground should not, they considered, deprive them of their claim to survival. They were the tillers of the soil and were entitled to a just share in the country's wealth which was being drawn off by the towns, and particularly by the urban Chinese. For their part the Chinese and Indians who had been born in Malaya or who had spent much of their life there felt that they had a claim to equal status and to equal opportunity in all respects with the other native races of the country.

This is broadly the situation that confronted the British Government, and I will now describe how a new approach is being made to it. Unity in this diversity had been maintained by the guiding hand of the British Government acting through advice to the Rulers. Economic and racial rivalries had been kept from developing dangerously, and social harmony had prevailed. This was well enough so long as "government from above", paternal government, endured: the question was how could the country be made to stand on its own feet when the time came, how could it be led to self-government, how could the divers elements be fused into a whole? These are questions that have yet to be answered, but one thing was clear: if a Malayan outlook were to grow and flourish it was an essential preliminary that the division of the peninsula into seven separate governments be removed and that an equality of status be conferred on members of all races who had Malaya as their home.

This was the initial problem and we will now consider how the British Government is addressing itself to it.

III. The proposals

The declaration of the British Government as to future Malayan policy came in the form of an answer by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to a question in Parliament made on October 10, 1945. It ran:

"His Majesty's Government have given careful consideration to the future of Malaya and the need to promote the sense of unity and common citizenship which will develop the country's strength and capacity in due course for self-government within the British Commonwealth.

"Our policy will call for a constitutional Union of Malaya and for the institution of a Malayan citizenship which will give equal citizenship rights to those who can claim Malaya to be their homeland. For these purposes fresh agreements will need to be arranged with the Malay State Rulers and fresh constitutional measures for the Straits

Settlements. I should, make it clear that the British character and British citizenship attaching to all the present settlements will not be affected by the constitutional measures we have in mind. How?

"The Malayan Union will consist of the nine States in the Malay Peninsula and of the two British Settlements of Penang and Malacca. The Settlement of Singapore at this stage requires separate constitutional treatment and in view of its special economic and other interests provision will be made for it to be constituted as a separate Colony.

"His Majesty's Government are however well aware of the many ties between Singapore and the mainland and that these ties may well work towards ultimate union. This will be a matter for the Governments of the Malayan Union, and Singapore to consider in due course.

"The Peoples of the Settlement of Penang (with Province Wellesley) and Malacca will lose none of their rights as British citizens and it is as British Settlements with their own appropriate institutions of local government no less than those in the States that Penang and Malacca will form part of the Malayan Union.

"His Majesty's Government have carefully considered the new constitutional measures necessary for the political, economic and social advancement of Malaya and have decided that fresh agreements with the several Malay Rulers need first to be arranged which will enable His Majesty to possess and exercise full jurisdiction in the Malay States. Sir Harold MacMichael has accordingly been appointed to visit Malaya as a special representative of His Majesty's Government to arrange agreements with the Rulers for this purpose. When His Majesty possesses jurisdiction it is intended by order in Council to constitute the Malayan Union.

"There will also be erected a Malayan Union citizenship for which the qualifications will be birth in Malaya or a suitable period of residence. There will be citizens of Malaya with all the rights and obligations which the term implies. None must rely upon past privilege or regard Malaya simply as a source of material wealth. While it is to the advantage of all the world and not only Malaya that the production of her mineral and agricultural resources should be restored and developed by industry and research it is right that the Malayan people should be assured of their full share in the rewards of their industry and shall be able to feel the country's wealth reflected in their own standard of life."

Almost simultaneously with the publication of this statement Sir Harold MacMichael arrived in Malaya. He has since been occupied in his mission and its result is likely to have been promulgated before this article is in print.⁶

It is important to appreciate in this connection that it is not possible to introduce new constitutional arrangements until the Malay Rulers have been consulted and have agreed to the exercise by His Majesty the King of jurisdiction in the States, so enabling institutions to be set up providing for the political development of the country as a whole. The intention is to lead the Peninsula, as a strong and united country, towards the goal of self-reliance and self-government within the British Commonwealth of Nations. Unless the British Government use their right of protecting Malaya in order to lead her forward in this direction, they will not have fulfilled their trust and will have failed to carry out their obligations towards the Malay people, towards the Malay Rulers as leaders of the people, and towards the whole population, of whatever race or creed. Accordingly the British Government has decided that certain changes are necessary in the structure of Government which existed in Malaya before the Japanese invasion. The first necessary change is that the King shall have such power in the nine States as will enable him to set up institutions which will provide for the political development of the country as a whole.

That is the first step. The next will be to constitute the Malayan Union, comprising, as has been said, all of the Malay States together with the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca, which as coastal ports largely dependent on Peninsula trade should naturally be included in the larger political unit. This will be a Union and not a confederation and, as befitting a small country, will possess a strong representative central legislature. This integration of the legislative and administrative arrangements of the Malay Peninsula will make at once for more efficient government, where formerly united action required the agreement of nine separate governments, a process which, taking into account the opportunity presented for local disagreement and different developments, did not make for speedy administration. On a longer view, too, this new constitution will enable the country, on a basis of unity rather than diversity, to move more rapidly to the development of that strength, self-reliance, and common purpose necessary for the promotion of self-government through nation-wide institutions in which the whole community can participate.

Complementary to the establishment of the Malayan Union is the promotion of a broad-based citizenship in which all may participate without discrimination of race or creed, subject to qualification of birth or a suitable period of residence in Malaya. Amongst the Malays there will thus be induced an allegiance to the country as a whole, and an opportunity is provided for them to play their part not only in the administrative and technical departments but also in the sphere of public affairs of the wider Union instead of, as hitherto, within the confines of a particular Malay State. On the other hand, the non-Malay peoples of the country, provided that their enterprise and capacity are accompanied by a sense of civic responsibility and political loyalty, will be enabled to exercise a due share in the building of

Malaya's future on a basis of common citizenship with the Malay subjects of the Rulers, with all the rights and obligations resulting.

Racial diversities cannot be swept aside by a mere pronouncement of policy. The Malays will be anxious that their need to compete on equal terms with the vigorous and more politically minded communities, particularly the Chinese, will not lead to a weakening of the position they have hitherto held; and clearly there are formidable difficulties to be overcome before this citizenship is working so that the previous harmony between the racial communities that was achieved hitherto by the balance provided by British paternal rule is evoked by the people themselves sinking their diversity in a common loyalty towards Malaya. As already stated, Britain's purpose is to lead the Peninsula, as a strong and united country, towards the goal of self-reliance and self-government within the British Commonwealth of Nations. That is the justification of a policy which does not shirk the issue. The difficulties that are likely to be encountered in carrying out the new policy are well realised and Britain will continue as in the past to contribute all it can to the smooth and peaceful development of Malaya. But there can be no satisfactory return to the old pre-war system, and essentially it is the people of Malaya who must prove that they can use the opportunity offered in a conscious spirit of common purpose and unity rather than of diversity and division.

I might briefly touch on the special position of Singapore, which, it is held, requires separate treatment and should not be a part of the Malayan Union. As a great centre of entrepôt trade and predominantly Chinese in population, Singapore has interests distinct from those of the mainland, which is largely a producer for export, and it is important that at the outset the successful establishment of the Malayan Union, with its own capital, should not be imperilled by the divergence of view and friction that might possibly arise if the island and the Peninsula were joined in one political group. The old Settlement of Singapore will therefore be constituted as the Colony of Singapore.⁷

IV. Reactions to the policy of Malaya

Sir Harold MacMichael arrived in Kuala Lumpur on October 11, 1945. The statement of the Secretary of State for the Colonies had appeared in the Malayan newspapers the preceding day. Sir Harold's arrival was announced in leaded type in the headlines of the English-language press, but there was no immediate comment on the Malayan Union proposals. The vernacular press also reported the arrival and the gist of the Secretary of State's announcement, but did not give these any exceptional publicity.

Considering the epoch-making nature of the measures contemplated, it is surprising how little attention has so far been given to the matter. But when the political situation in Malaya is taken into review the surprise diminishes.

To explain why this is so, it becomes necessary to insert a brief impression of the contemporary political scene with as much background as will render the impression intelligible.

Malaya was long said to have no politics. This meant *domestic* politics, and if this distinction is borne in mind it can be accepted as relatively true. The Malays were content in their allegiance to their Sultans and while their interests were largely local, their race and the Mohammedan religion made them a unity. The immigrant races were absorbed for decades in the mere mechanics of making a living, or, in the higher grades, a fortune.⁸ The politics which they had imported in the last three decades related exclusively to their native country. With the Indians the interest of a minority in the events in India had no great effect on their relations with other races, though amongst sections of the Indian community there existed sharp distinctions and rivalries. But the growth in political-mindedness of the Chinese in relation to the politics of their homeland had a far-reaching influence on Malaya itself.

How little China was a nation under the Manchu Dynasty can be brought home by an incident that occurred during the Second War between Britain and China in 1857-60. British troops en route to China to take part in the war were camped on the Esplanade at Singapore. The local Chinese merchants and citizens went out of their way to entertain the officers and men of the contingent and presented them with addresses of welcome—and this despite the fact that they were on the way to take part in a war against their own countrymen! But the Singapore Chinese did not look at things in this way: the war they regarded as a private affair between the British and the alien Manchu Dynasty.

But as the century wore on there were signs of an incipient sense of Chinese nationalism. China was realizing that her weak position was due partly to backwardness in science but even more to her lack of unity. National leaders began to arise, and the new spirit was nowhere more welcomed than among the Chinese of the *Nanyang* ("Southern Ocean"), as Malaysia was called by them. Sun Yat-sen visited the Straits Settlements early in the present century and received much financial support from the Malayan Chinese.

The Kuomintang, however, was not very important until 1927. Sun Yat-sen during his lifetime had small and intermittent political power in China, but after his death his "Three Principles of the People" became the Bible of Chinese Nationalism. With the advance of the Nationalist Party in 1927 under Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang assumed a new importance. Chiang purged it of Communists.⁹ These events were reflected in Malaya. The left wing of the Kuomintang split off and became the main part of the Malayan Communist Party.

After the Manchurian incident of 1931 anti-Japanese feeling among the Chinese was strong in Malaya. The Youth Movements were in favour of direct action against those who traded in Japanese goods, and the resultant

attempts at boycott embarrassed the Malayan Governments since Britain was then attempting to maintain a neutral attitude in the Far Eastern situation. After 1937, when there was open war between China and Japan, the action of the young hotheads in Malaya in tarring the premises of alleged traders in Japanese goods and in even more violent action led to collision with the authorities. But by this time the "Anti-Japanese Backing-up Society," as they called themselves, was affiliated to the Communist Party rather than the Kuomintang.

Neither the Kuomintang nor the Communist Party was a registered society in Malaya: consequently they were illegal. A compromise was reached in 1931 (the Lampson-Wang Agreement) whereby the Malayan laws were amended to permit of a Chinese being a member of the Kuomintang in China, but the Party was not to be organized locally. It was felt by the Malayan Governments that the introduction of external politics into Malaya was a hindrance to the growth of a Malayan sentiment, and leaders of the Straits-born Chinese, though attached to China by sentiment and custom, supported this view. But the Kuomintang continued nevertheless to organize and operate within Malaya.

The Malayan Communist Party had been operating underground for a number of years, and while it lent its support to the National Government of China after the agreement following the Sian incident, it was hostile in its propaganda towards the British cause. The attack on Russia by Germany brought about a change in its policy after some interval whereby Britain was not to be attacked in propaganda, but it was not until the Japanese invasion of Malaya that the Malayan Communist Party sided definitely with the Allies.

At the end of 1941 a Chinese Mobilization Committee was formed under Tan Kah Kee and its members included members of both parties. The recognition of this Committee by the Governor constituted a tacit recognition in the emergency of the rights of both Kuomintang and Communists to exist. Communist volunteers did good work and some fought in the mangrove swamps of Singapore when the Japanese invaded the island.

With the fall of Singapore an iron curtain descended on Malaya and cut it off from the outside world. The Japanese made an immediate onslaught on their enemies, the Chinese, especially the Communists, and they massacred them to a number that has been placed at anything between 40,000 and 100,000. An underground resistance movement began even before the Japanese occupation; one form of it, the guerilla organisation, was under Communist inspiration. The political organisation became known as the Anti-Japanese Union (A.J.U.) and the guerilla forces under its direction as the Anti-Japanese Army (A.J.A.). Later British officers were brought into Malaya by submarine or parachute, making contact with the guerillas, and an agreement was signed whereby the A.J.A. accepted the operational direction of the Supreme Allied Commander and in return the British supplied

the A.J.A. with arms, food and clothing. The intention was to use the A.J.A. in the forthcoming invasion of Malaya, but the Japanese surrender rendered this unnecessary.

The political scene on the return of the British was transformed from that of 1942. The A.J.U. began to convert itself into "People's Political Associations" or "Self-Help Societies". These claim to represent the people of the area as a whole, but although a number of Malays and Indians have been brought forward as evidence of this contention, the fact is that the movement is Chinese led and mainly Chinese in composition. The Kuomintang is beginning to organise again in the cities and the *San Min Chu I* Youth are also coming to the fore, but the Communist-inspired societies are much the most active and vocal. The policy of the British Military Administration is to allow free association and freedom of speech and of the press, which privileges are being availed of with vigour, and that of the press sometimes with abandon! Members of the political parties have been invited to serve on the Advisory Councils formed to assist the B.M.A., and the Communist and Kuomintang members sit side by side with leading merchants and officials.

Chinese politics are the most noticeable in the contemporary Malayan scene, but the Malays have also begun to show political activity and a Malay National Party has been formed in Perak by delegates from the whole of Malaya. The relationship between Malays and Chinese, so harmonious under the old British regime in spite of the underlying rivalry, has been impaired by deliberate Japanese policy. The Japanese favoured the Malays at first at the expense of the Chinese but later treated both with almost equal oppression and callousness. They actively fomented trouble between the races, and this is having its aftermath in the British reoccupation, in clashes between Chinese and Malays in certain areas. These troubles have been brought under control by the B.M.A., but the possibility of their recurrence will remain a source of anxiety.

This broadly is the background against which we must consider the local reaction to the proposed Malayan Union.

The press of Malaya is still in a fluid state. Most of the old newspapers have been revived under new management, usually in an abbreviated form because of the shortage of newsprint, and many new ones have sprung up. Many of these are of a mushroom nature and are not likely to survive for long.

Foremost among the old established English-language papers is the *Straits Times*, which represents the conservative interests. In an editorial of October 16, 1945, the paper welcomed the Malayan Union proposals and approved of the separation of Singapore from the mainland. It was in favour of a central government:

"So far as it is necessary to co-ordinate pan-Malayan services and enforce principles of British colonial policy, but, not, we hope,

taking so rigid and dictatorial a line as to kill State consciousness or healthy autonomy in purely State affairs. There is enough standardization and regimentation in the world today, without destroying the individuality of these little States in the Malay Peninsula. But neither can we contemplate any return to the absurdities of pre-war Malaya, when the Governor and High Commissioner had to try to get agreement on pan-Malayan affairs among the seven separate and independent governments (not counting the four State Governments within the Federation). If we are right in assuming that the Malayan Union will have one purse into which all the tin and rubber and customs revenues will flow, then the most independent of the Unfederated Malay States will have cause to bless the day that not only brought them deliverance from Siam but brought them into the Malayan Union."

This represents the attitude of the other English-language papers fairly enough, though the *Malaya Tribune* expressed the hope in its issue of October 13 that "Sir Harold MacMichael will see not only the bigwigs but will also consider the smaller fry."¹⁰

The Malay vernacular press is neither large nor very active at the present moment.¹¹ The Malays, it is clear, are still very confused after their vicissitudes under the Japanese and have not yet got their opinions in order. But the formation of the Malay National Party is the first sign of their recognition that they are now living in a world of politics.¹²

An editorial of October 22 in *Utusan Malaya* welcomes the idea of a Malayan Union without reservation. "The Malays," it says, "were glad to hear the news that the various States in Malaya would be united in one and in the future known as the Malayan Union. This is in line with their expectations." The paper remarks that ten years ago the Malays realized that one of the reasons for their backwardness was the provincial division of the country. The proposal to introduce Malayan citizenship was the outcome of the principle of democracy. The Malays should not be alarmed at this as their interests will be protected by the British Government. They will have the same equality and freedom as other races in Malaya. Misgivings, however, find expression in the correspondence columns of the same newspaper. One correspondent on the same date hoped that the Malays would exercise caution in making agreements with the British Government and protect the interests of the Malays.¹³ Another reader in the issue of the following day said that certain sections of the Malays are alarmed since the other races are numerically superior in Malaya, and they will naturally favour persons of their own kind. One consolation, he added, is that the Rulers are being consulted.

The Singapore Tamil newspaper, *Tamil Murasu*, calculated the number of Indians who will be eligible for Malayan Union citizenship qualified by

residence. It would be doubtful, the paper said, whether Indian sojourners should obtain Malayan Union citizenship or remain Indian citizens.¹⁴ "Commercial interests," the paper concluded, "will not be the monopoly of Malayan Union citizens. The Indians are of the opinion that if they are given the same privileges as all other foreign countries they will be satisfied."

The Chinese vernacular press is interested mainly in the question of representation.

The *Sin Chew Jit Poh* (an old established Singapore Chinese paper) in an editorial of October 15th asked why the Sultans had been chosen as the persons with whom arrangements are to be made. The writer remarked that the Sultans represent only a small proportion of the Malays and have no claim at all to represent the Chinese. The paper expressed a hope that the British Government would respect the right of "racial self-determination" adopted by the San Francisco Conference.

The same paper on the same day said that the China-born Chinese pay rates and taxes and are as much entitled to share in the government as the locally born. Moreover, the Malayan-born Chinese have had only a "colonial education" and therefore do not understand world tendencies, and cannot be expected to represent the interests of the people.

The New Democracy (*Sin Min Chu*), a Singapore Chinese-language leftist paper, on October 12 criticized the policy of separating Singapore from the mainland as being merely a continuation of the old British colonial policy of "divide and rule". Like all the Communist newspapers in Malaya, the New Democracy takes up a generally hostile position. It remarks that the "feudalistic Sultans should be relegated to the realm of forgotten things. The five million people of the three races, Chinese, Indians, and Malays, like other races under oppression, demand complete independence. No form of the old colonial rule will satisfy them."

The Chinese press as a whole reveals only a lukewarm interest in the Malayan Union proposals. It approves the idea of equality of citizenship and conveys the impression that the proposals are all right so far as they go but it feels that they do not touch the essence of the matter. That essence is democratic representation.

If we regard the programmes of the parties and interests that have so far declared themselves as pointers to Malays' destiny, we must be dismayed by the fact that they point in different directions. How much this is so can be indicated by a summary of the objects for which these parties and interests stand.

There are first of all the racial divisions—the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. The Malays, with their background of Islam and their attachment to their Rulers, form a solid bloc in sentiment except for the few who may adhere to the Communist Party and who are thereby, in Malay public opinion, *déclassés*. The Malays are, moreover, peasant proprietors and do not

form an industrial proletariat. They are not yet politically organised or vocal, but there are signs of an awakening to their insecure position and they may rally.

The Chinese can be divided roughly into (a) Kuomintang supporters, (b) supporters of the Communist Party, which is the organising force behind the People's Democratic Associations and other leftist groups, (c) the members of labour unions who are chiefly interested in wages and conditions of labour though labour is Communist-dominated, and (d) the Malayan-born Chinese who, though Chinese in race and sentiment, are chiefly interested in Malaya and their future therein. The Kuomintang stands for the interests of the Overseas Chinese and of China itself—it is not concerned with the idea of a Malayan nation but confines its aims to extending the rights and interests of Overseas Chinese.

The Malayan Communist Party contemplates Malaya as an entity, and membership in the associations sponsored by it is open to all races. Its eventual aim is a Malayan republic, but this aim is at present in abeyance and the Party confines itself to the "Eight Points" (freedom of association, an eight-hour day, etc.) which are not of a revolutionary character. In any case its ability to enlist the support of the Malays as a body, even over a period of years, is exceedingly doubtful.

The Indians are numerically inferior to the two other races and unlikely to play a dominant role. The conservative forces in Malaya are only just in the process of organising but they have powerful resources and can count on at least the tacit support of a considerable section of the community. And outside of the above parties must be counted the bulk of the people who are not really politically minded or politically informed but will be swayed by any programme which promises an improvement in their livelihood.

We must ask ourselves whether any of these party programmes are likely of themselves to give Malaya unity and the ability to stand by herself? The answer, it seems, must be "No". Malaya, by reason of its peculiar history and development, has been in the past governed by directives from above, though with a careful regard to public opinion. The time has come now when Britain must adopt a plan to bring into association and harmony the administrative policy with the political aspirations of the people which are now finding expression. The forces now at work must be guided so that they tend to the consolidation of Malaya as a strong and self-sufficient entity. The first step must be towards this Union and this is what the present proposals of the British Government are intended to secure. After this Union is achieved will come the problem of devising a democratic representative system based on a democratic system of education which will work without splitting the country into factions.

Notes

- 1 Brunei in Borneo is also a British Protected State and was normally included with the Unfederated Malay States since the Governor of the Straits Settlements was High Commissioner for all the Malay States including Brunei. Labuan and Brunei are, however, not included in the Constitutional proposals with which this article deals.
- 2 A despatch from the Colonial Secretary of September 20th, 1873, addressed to Sir Andrew Clarke, the Governor, ran as follows:

"Her Majesty's Government have, it need hardly be said, no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of the Malay States, but, looking to the long and intimate connection between them and the British Government. Her Majesty's Government find it incumbent to employ such influence as they may possess with the native princes to rescue, if possible, these fertile and productive countries from the ruin which must befall them if the present disorders continue unchecked."

The despatch further instructed the Governor to consider whether it would be advisable to appoint a British officer to reside in any of the States. "Such an appointment could, of course, only be made with the full consent of the native Government."

- 3 It succeeded an older and smaller confederation. The Yam Tuan of Sri Menanti was in 1895 elected titular head of the whole State, and his successors have since been elected in a similar way from the same family.
- 4 Mr. Harold Butler, in his report to the governing body of the International Labour Office at Geneva in 1938, said: "Owing to its natural riches, which are no doubt destined to further development, and owing to the outlay of considerable sums on health, education, housing and communications, the country can afford to its inhabitants a standard of living, using the term in its broadest sense, substantially higher than in most Eastern countries. Indeed, Malaya, like Sumatra, is an admirable example of what can be done to raise the level of civilization in the East, when scientific methods can be applied on a sufficiently large scale to a country possessing a rainy climate, a fertile soil and mineral resources, and containing a population well within its capacity to provide not only with a bare subsistence but with the facilities for physical and cultural development."
- 5 The Malayan dollar is backed by Sterling and is worth 2/4d or approximately 47 cents, U. S.
- 6 It has now been announced in a White Paper on Malayan Union and Singapore (Cmd. 6724), published on January 22, 1946, that Sir Harold MacMichael has "successfully concluded with each of the Malay Rulers, after consultations conducted with friendliness and goodwill, an agreement which, supplementing the existing Treaties, grants full jurisdiction in each State to His Majesty the King of England".
- 7 The White Paper on Malaya (Cmd. 6724) already referred to states on this point that "It is recognised, however, that there were and will be close ties between Singapore and the mainland, and it is no part of the policy of His Majesty's Government to preclude or prejudice in any way the fusion of Singapore and the Malayan Union in a wider union at a later date should it be considered that such a course were desirable." It states further, "There will be a special need to develop harmonious and mutually profitable relations between the Malayan Union and Singapore on matters of trade. Subjects of pan-Malayan importance which require full identity of policy throughout Malaya, such as Higher Education,

- Immigration, Currency, Income Tax, Civil Aviation, Posts and Telegraphs, Shipping and other matters, will be matters of common arrangement between the Union and the Colony. The currency will continue to be managed under pan-Malayan agreement."
- 8 There was a saying that the Chinese did not mind who held the cow so long as they milked it!
 - 9 The first two Principles of Sun Yat-sen were written under Russian influence; the last one, "People's Livelihood" (i.e., economics), was written under more moderate and even bourgeois influences.
 - 10 Since this was written the English-language press has begun to pay more attention to the Malayan Union proposals, and space is given to articles from well-known Malaysians and ex-Malayans, pro and con.
 - 11 The Malay National Party has started its own newspaper.
 - 12 Leaflets in Malay and English were recently posted up in Kedah, declaring that equality of citizenship was "the death-knell of the Malays".
 - 13 For the first time in the history of Malaya a Sakai woman has made a speech at Ipoh demanding equal rights for the Sakai. "Sakai" is the term current in Malaya for the aboriginal races collectively which include quite distinct ethnic groups, e.g., the negritos. The Sakai do not number more than 30,000 at the present time.
 - 14 Those Indians who are Malayan Union citizens will not lose their Indian citizenship.

REACTIONS TO THE MALAYAN UNION

Gerald Hawkins

Source: *Pacific Affairs* 19(3) (1946): 279-85.

The description of Malaya as "a plural society dominated by economic forces and devoid of any common social will" may be incomplete, but it does, at least, serve to show the complexity of a country which had three types of British administration, ten independent sultans and their governments, and a population four-sevenths alien, these aliens being Chinese, Indian, European, and Eurasian, with separatist influences. To tidy up a sprawling administration and to give more rights to the domiciled elements of the population was necessary for the political progress of Malaya and the Malays. The British government after long gestation produced a scheme, "The Malayan Union", in which a loose federation was replaced by a union and Malayan citizenship was generously conferred.¹

To gauge reactions in such a medley is difficult. When an important change such as the Malayan Union is introduced, how much of the opposition is political? How much is economic? Is the Press a reliable guide? Are the many new papers substantial organs of opinion? Or are they the mushroom type that lives on second-hand printing machines and expires before the end of the period for which advance subscriptions have been collected? Are the various clubs, unions, societies, parties and so on voicing the views of the mass of the people or merely of sectional and selfish interests? Responsible government must be based on accurate information, and an attempt to ascertain the reactions of the people most affected by the Union is worth making. The Far East is astir, and stability cannot be obtained without a diagnosis of its troubles. So far as Malaya is concerned there has been a flood of public expression which can be conveniently charted. This chart divides the subject into two areas, Britain and Malaya.

In England, the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* have devoted liberal space to the proposed changes. Leading articles, special articles and

correspondence have ventilated many sides of the question. The *Manchester Guardian* has been relatively silent. The more "popular" press suffuses colourful but conventional views of Malaya, paints Singapore as "the Sink of the East", refers to exquisite greenery and sun-drenched landscapes spoiled by the figures of whisky-swilling planters making their health as frail as their girl friends. This dubious reputation was always a mystery to the British in Malaya, who were acutely aware of the drab respectability of their lives. But when the fall of Singapore was ascribed partly to this moral laxity, they blazed with fury and advanced the unanswerable question, "How does such a degenerate set produce half the world's tin, half the world's rubber, much rice and much copra?" But old reputations, however unsubstantiated, die hard.

The *Times* is particularly informative and its hospitably opened correspondence columns called attention to all of the difficulties involved, legal as well as moral, in altering the status of independent protectorates into more closely controlled dependencies. Sir George Maxwell has repeatedly queried the constitutional right of the government to make such changes. A weighty letter appeared in the *Times* on April 16, 1946. It was above the signatures of five former Governors, three Colonial or Chief Secretaries, seven former British Residents or Advisers, and two former Chief Justices. This impressively-worded letter deprecated the summary manner in which the Rulers were "invited" to sign the new agreements which they "imperfectly understood", with "no advice legal or other, at their disposal", and "with no opportunity adequately to consult their State Councils and their subjects". It suggested that a scheme of federation would have been favourably considered. It deprecated the exclusion of Singapore and the manner in which the people of Malaya were being coerced without regard to democratic principles into what was, in effect, the annexation of the Malay States. In the House of Commons this has been called "The Pro-Consular Letter". Sir Richard Winstedt, in an article in *The Spectator*, dubbed the methods by which the signatures to the agreements had been obtained as "sharp practice".

A full debate in the House of Commons revealed, as usual, wide knowledge of the problems inherent in the change. It disclosed that the scheme had been in the alembic of the government's advisers for several years, and that the Labour Government was merely its legatee. Its spokesman, Mr. Creech Jones, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, pointed out that the administration was top-heavy, and that ten autonomous States in an area equal to England were an anachronism, and that a big proportion of the population was outside political rights. He declared that federation was no way to deal with the problem and that government was determined to use the present opportunity to establish a political union and common citizenship. Anticipating resentment and protest, he undertook to give closest attention to all suggestions while reserving many points for further discussion locally.

This undertaking has been renewed, and compromises will be made after local consultation. The Opposition confined its attacks to the methods by which the agreements had been obtained, the haste with which changes were being introduced, and the danger of racial submergence to which the Malays were being exposed. A Labour Member (Mr. Tom Driberg) probably best expressed the general feeling, not only of the House but of the whole country, when he remarked, "I do not want to go back to the *status quo* . . . we must have a forward policy but it must not be merely imposed. There must be freer consultation than there has been hitherto . . . We are doing the right thing in the wrong way. We cannot talk to colonial people . . . in the voice of a Whitehall Uncle. . . . This scheme has been put across so high-handedly, unimaginatively and smugly that I am sorry to say I cannot support it."

Reactions in Malaya are more difficult to determine. It has been often said that Malaya has no politics, which is another way of saying that the country was honestly administered and enjoyed a large share of economic security. The immigrant races came to the country for economic reasons. A sojourn of not many years yielded enough capital to provide for return to their mother country and a comfortable old age. Such birds of passage took their nest eggs away, only a few settled down and these, in the enjoyment of the substantial benefits of Malayan residence, did not brood on the lack of nominal rights.

The first reception of the new proposals was very guarded. The main differences between the old and new regimes lie in the altered status of the Rulers, in the absorption rather than the federation of the States, and in the grant of citizenship. The purport of these divergencies was not easy to comprehend and it was some little time before light was shed on the obscurities. The Malays were the first to grasp the significance of the change and show ever-increasing hostility. The grant of Malayan Union citizenship was particularly resented, but, curiously enough, this grant, which was the change they most feared, has awakened small enthusiasm among the aliens whom it was designed to benefit. The aliens generally felt the logic of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who declared in Singapore on March 19 that Indians must choose between being nationals of Malaya or of India, and that if they claimed Malayan citizenship and privileges they could not at the same time claim the privileges of Indian citizens. Chinese, Indians, Ceylonese, and Indonesians, thinking of their own countries' greatness and prospects of further greatness, paused before committing themselves to Malayan citizenship. There was no rush to register.

For the first time in history, the voice of the Sakai, the primitive aborigines, was heard in the land. A Sakai, and a woman at that, protested at a public meeting in Ipoh against the proposals.

The Press as a whole—save for the Malay papers—welcomed the changes. The *Straits Echo* and *Penang Gazette*, while regarding the grant of equal

citizenship as a step in the right direction, protested against the inclusion of Penang in the Union. The *Straits Times* (published in Singapore and easily the most important paper in Malaya) agreed that Penang had been badly treated. It stated that Malay opposition was becoming intensified and organised. Suggesting that Sino-Malayan relations were being exacerbated, it favoured a modification of the proposals for granting citizenship and held that the principle of Union would be acceptable after full consultation and the making of a few concessions.

The Indian Press, preoccupied with Indian politics, accepted the basic features of the scheme with satisfaction rather than enthusiasm.

The Chinese in the Malay Peninsula form two main groups—those born or long resident in Malaya, and those who have recently arrived. The first class, the Straits-born Chinese as they are called, are the wealthiest, most intelligent and progressive of all communities in Malaya. It is they whose lack of political rights should be made good. They welcome the scheme but with their customary good sense admit that their outstanding achievements and abilities have won them a place which political rights can regularise but not improve. The leading Chinese paper, the *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, is mildly sceptical about the whole scheme. The *Chung Hwa* affirms that "Malaya is the second mother country of the Chinese" and "if we want to have rights of citizenship in Malaya we must either openly declare or quietly consent that we are separated from our mother country". The *New Democracy*, a Chinese paper printed in English, has Communist elements and is quite untainted with idealist considerations. It attributed base motives to the British government and accused it of attempting economic monopoly. It also described the sultans as "feudal relics".

The Malay Press was instantly and unanimously hostile. The *Utusan Malayu*, the most influential paper, asserted that "the Labour Government's disregard for the views of the Malay Rulers, subjects and press, will bring very bad effects in the future. We fear that Malaya will be more turbulent than Palestine." But with the innate realism of the Malay it recognised that times had altered, and accepted, though with large modifications, the general principles of the proposals.

The Malays are not vocal; their papers are small in number and limited in circulation. It is amazing how quickly Malay opinion was mobilised. The Malay is a small-holder, or fisherman, who can satisfy his modest needs of food and shelter in the charming surroundings of his *kampung*, the world forgetting and by the world forgot. But just as at the dawn of modern times the Thomist doctrine of the Just Price dissolved with the coming of better communications and the arrival of strangers with their different goods, so has the economic isolation of the Malay tended to yield to the impact of Western civilisation with its eager supply and demand of new materials. The *kampongs* were not so sleepy as some men supposed. Religious questioning

over the modernism of the *Kaum Muda* were but a symptom of this growing consciousness. The Malays responded at once to the challenge of the Union and the citizenship proposals. The Malays are firm adherents of a Mohammedanism, which is a magnificent social democracy. They have other democratic institutions such as *Mukim* (Parish) Councils, unions, societies, associations and clubs. All went into action.

The courtesy of the Malay makes him reluctant to voice open disapproval, to contradict, or to "withstand to the face", but he conquered his shyness and fired shot after shot at the vulnerable target of the new proposals. He declared that British Power had previously been merely Advisers to the Rulers, but now the Rulers were merely advisers to it; that the Rulers had been more coerced than consulted, and their status had been reduced to that of Chief Kathies; that the people had been ignored; that the protectorates had become possessions; and that the Chinese would ultimately swamp the Malays. Placards appeared on Malayan buildings: "Pro-British but not Pro-Union". School children in procession carried banners inscribed "Fathers! Preserve our rights till we grow up!" In Johore a public meeting declared that the government and country were not the property of the Sultan but of the people, that the Sultan in affixing his signature to the new treaty had violated Clause 15 of the Constitution and had betrayed the trust that God had given him, so that people were no longer bound to be loyal to him, and that he should not be recognised as Sultan and Leader. To anyone acquainted with the Malay's habitual understatement and with his reverence for the sultans, such language is staggering.

On March 1 the Sultan of Selangor delivered the opening address at the Pan-Malayan Congress in Kuala Lumpur. A Johore Malay, Dato Onn bin Jaffar, spoke of racial extinction. The meeting resolved that the agreements executed were not in accordance with the Constitution, were contrary to democratic principles, and amounted to downright annexation. The meeting asked for full examination of the conditions in Malay and, for the present, a withdrawal of the proposal and a return to the *status quo*.

All classes of Malays were agitated. The sultans found themselves in the unhappy position of acting as buffers between their people and the government. They courteously but firmly refused to attend the ceremony of installation of Sir Edward Gent as Governor of the Malayan Union on April 1. They hoped that no misunderstanding would arise as to their reasons for absence. They had no intention whatever of disrespect to any of H.M. Representatives but felt that while their representations against the Malayan Union were pending they did not wish to do anything that might prejudice their case. They ended with expressions of loyalty and sincere prayers. The Rulers are seeking passage to England for discussions with the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The leading families of the Malays have a not unnatural objection to the loss of privileges. Their fear may not be well founded. So far they have not

said much. Many are persons of outstanding ability who occupy with distinction high posts in the administration. While such men are in government employ they are subject to the ordinary disciplines of the service and are precluded from becoming popular leaders.

The middle and lower classes dread the competition of the more active and efficient immigrants. Under the old dispensation Malays enjoyed various preferences in securing government employment and free education. They apprehend that these will be taken away and that they will be left naked to their competitors. Malayan citizenship is regarded as a monster that could become Frankenstein. The Malays themselves form only three-sevenths of the population, and to this fraction is joined the Indonesians, whose first loyalty has been to their birthplace. The alien races have increased rapidly, partly through immigration and partly because they outbred the Malays. Different in race, religion and culture, they have proved completely unassimilable. Racial relations will be embittered and there are all of the makings of a Far Eastern Palestine in the always plural society of Malaya.

Malay opinion is being focussed by two main bodies, the Nationalist Party and the Malay Congress Party. The Nationalist Party is slightly secretive; some of the leaders are of Indonesian origin. They number 60,000 and favour the new proposals with modification. They do not believe in the rule of the sultans, but in a Malaya closely linked with Indonesia. Communist influences are traceable and the party is not interested in the British Commonwealth. The Malay Congress Party controls 80 per cent of the Malays. They are against all of the proposals but are prepared to consider and accept some form of union. The strength of this party derives from its unquestioned loyalty to the British government, to the openness and frankness of its deliberations, to its independence of other parties, and to the strictly constitutional manner of its actions.

Sir Edward Gent, the Governor of the Malayan Union, wrote to the Rulers on April 2 that there can be no question of the policy of Union being abandoned in favour of a policy of federation; that the Rulers would have every opportunity of consultation; that their views would receive most careful consideration; and that there was enough capacity and imagination in the country to settle the problems. One hopes that this is so. Legal continuity is to be respected, and the highly important Malay Reservation Lands policy is to be maintained.

Captain L. D. Gammans, a Conservative Member of Parliament, who with a Labour Member of Parliament was despatched to Malaya to report on the proposals, made some public statements on May 29. He declared that he was shocked to find Malaya, which he had known as one of the happiest and most contented countries, rent from end to end by political differences. He had not met a single person, European, Chinese, Indian or Malay, who was in favour of the proposals for Union in their present form. He said: "What the Malays want is to sit down and thrash out a new treaty which will

take into consideration the conditions of the post-war world." "MacMichaelism", as they call it, "must be buried".²

It is universally agreed that changes were necessary. It is also generally agreed that the methods of initiating the changes were precipitate. "*Fieri non debuit, sed factum valet.*" The issues have been narrowed down to two cruxes: first, Union or Federation; second, Closer Limitation of Citizenship. The English spirit of compromise and the Malay gift for improvisation should not find the problem incapable of a just and workable solution.

Note

- 1 For the text of the British proposals for Malayan Union, and a discussion of its background, see Victor Purcell, "A Malayan Union: The Proposed New Constitution", *Pacific Affairs*, March 1946, pp. 20-40.
- 2 Sir Harold MacMichael was the negotiator of the new agreements.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION IN MALAYA

D. R. Rees-Williams

Source: *Pacific Affairs* 20(2) (1947): 174-8.

Of all of the Far Eastern colonial territories reoccupied after the recent war, Malaya alone exhibited little desire for constitutional change; it wished only for a return to the old days. In planning the final stages of the Pacific war, however, the Allies had selected Malaya as a base from which to attack Japanese positions in Asia, and in order to stabilise the Malayan base as effectively as possible, they had decided that a strong central government should be established in the country after its reoccupation. Since Japan capitulated before the Allied return to Malaya, there was no need, as far as immediate military considerations were concerned, for constitutional changes. Nevertheless, in October 1945 the British government announced its plan for a "constitutional Union of Malaya".¹

The manner in which the proposals were put to their Rulers upset the Malays, and very shortly national agitation arose in opposition to the plan. Leaders in the agitation were priests and schoolmasters, who saw in the proposals a threat to Malay prestige and power, and hence to the Mohammedan religion and Malay culture. Their criticism was echoed by Europeans who had held high office in Malaya and who believed that Malays should hold the power in their own country.

In May and June 1946, at the suggestion of the then Secretary of State, the author and his Parliamentary colleague, Captain L. D. Gammans, M.P., toured Malaya in order to sound out national sentiment. In every hamlet, village and town that we visited we were met by what appeared to be the whole of the population. For the first time in their history, the Malays had become politically conscious. Women spoke at public gatherings and attended public banquets. The culmination of our tour took place at the Sultan of Perak's palace in Kuala Kangsar, where we met the eight Rulers,

the Regent of Johore and representatives of the United Malay National Organization and of the Malay Nationalist Party.

Even at that time these two Malay bodies held somewhat different views. Although the United Malay National Organization was a conservative group which desired to return to the old system and defended State against federal rights, its leaders realised the necessity for a strong central government and they were quite prepared to participate in it as long as the feelings of the Malays were placated and the interests of the States recognised. The Malay Nationalist Party was and is inspired by republican principles, and favours union, eventual removal of the Rulers, and reduction of State powers. It also supports the Indonesians and Indo-Chinese in their struggles for freedom. Both parties objected to the way in which the constitutional issues had been handled.

In response to our request, the Rulers and the U.M.N.O. representatives agreed to meet the Governor General and the Governor of the Malayan Union, whom they had hitherto boycotted. Subsequently a Working Committee was appointed at a conference of the Governor of the Malayan Union, the Rulers of the Malay States and the representatives of U.M.N.O. This Committee sat from July onwards and issued a report in December. In framing its recommendations the Committee bore in mind the need to establish a strong central government, to secure the individuality of each of the Malay States and Settlements, to afford a form of citizenship for those who consider Malaya their home, to safeguard the special position of the Malays as indigenous inhabitants, and to ensure the financial stability of the country.

The Committee recommended the establishment, under the protection of Great Britain, of a Federation of Malaya, consisting of the nine Malay States and the Settlements of Penang and Malacca. It suggested that power be reserved to His Majesty's Government and to the Rulers to admit, from time to time, any other territory within this Federation. His Majesty's Government are to have complete control of defence and external affairs. There is to be set up a central government comprising a High Commissioner, who will have a dual function: in matters of defence and external affairs he will act as a representative of His Majesty; in other matters he will act in pursuance of authority delegated to him by His Majesty and the Rulers. The Rulers will accept his advice in all matters of government, excepting those relating to the Mohammedan religion or Malay customs. In the exercise of his executive powers the High Commissioner will have certain special responsibilities with reference to the position of the Rulers and that of the Malays, the rights of the States, and the stability of the federal government. There is to be a federal executive council, consisting of official and unofficial members appointed by the High Commissioner. There is also suggested a federal legislative council, consisting partly of official members and partly of unofficial members, who will in turn be appointed by the High Commissioner and will represent various interests such as labour, planting, mining,

commerce, etc. Except insofar as the Malays and Europeans are concerned, representation is not to be allocated on a racial basis, but the labour representation is intended to include non-Malays.

The report contains detailed suggestions regarding the position of the Rulers and for a conference of Rulers which will meet whenever necessary and at least three times a year, the High Commissioner being present. Every Ruler will receive, before publication in the Gazette, a copy of every Bill to be presented to the legislative council. There is provision for the establishment of a court of civil and criminal jurisdiction, consisting of a high court and a court of appeal. A model State agreement is appended, and every Ruler undertakes to promulgate a written constitution for his State in conformity with this agreement. In every State there will be an executive council to advise the Ruler in the exercise of his executive functions, and a council of state, which is, in effect, a legislative council. In the vexed question of citizenship, it is proposed that citizenship shall not be regarded as nationality; it will not affect the status of British subjects in Malaya, or the status of subjects of the Rulers, since it is intended to be an addition to and not a subtraction from nationality.² The form of citizenship proposed is an automatic acquisition by persons who have been born in the territory or have certain residential qualifications, or whose fathers had certain residential qualifications, in the country. There is a further provision for the acquisition of federal citizenship upon application by persons who have resided in Malaya for not less than 15 of the previous 20 years, possess certain other qualifications, and are prepared to take the oath of citizenship.

In spite of some misgivings on the part of the Malay Nationalist Party, we may take it that these proposals are broadly acceptable both to the British government and to most Malays. The next stage is to elicit the views of the other races. When the author was in Malaya in 1946 the Chinese and the Indians took little interest in the constitutional question. There was a Malayan Democratic Union, membership in which, while open to all races, was in fact mainly Chinese and small in any case. It sought self-government within the British Commonwealth, a legislative assembly for Malaya composed of freely elected representatives, suffrage for all Malayan citizens above the age of 21, and certain social reforms. More recently the Chinese and Indian communities have been showing greater interest in the constitutional issue. For example, the Malayan Democratic Union has supported the government's plan, although it has been very tactful in not obtruding its views lest it irritate the Malays and thus create friction in the country. Initially many of the Chinese felt that, as birds of passage, they need not take much interest in the constitutional issue so long as their economic position in Malaya was maintained. The Indians felt much the same, especially after Mr. Nehru's visit, when he told them that if they wished to become Malayan citizens they would have to surrender Indian nationality. The intense Malay

propaganda, however, has had its effect in counter-propaganda among the other races. Their view is that their peoples have done much to develop the country and to obtain the social and educational advantages now enjoyed by all races. It is to be hoped, however, that if the Chinese and the Indians conclude that their economic position is safeguarded and that the way is open for a steady progress towards self-government, as indeed it is, they will accept the scheme proposed by the Working Committee. They may, in fact, rejoice that many of the constitutional difficulties are past and that Malaya can now proceed confidently into the future.

While this is true of the majority of the Chinese and Indian residents, it must be remembered that there is a minority of both races, of long standing in the country, which is occupied mainly in trade and commerce. This minority believes that it should have something to say about the constitutional issue. Recently a Council of Joint Action, comprising representatives of 11 left-wing political bodies and communal associations, was created in Singapore. Its expressed object is "to provide the machinery for the various communities, through their organizations and associations, to reach agreement on all points connected with the future constitution of Malaya, thus avoiding the dangers of separated and self-interested representation". The first meeting, held on December 14, 1946, and sponsored by the Malayan Democratic Union, the Malay Nationalist Party, the Regional Malay and Indian Congress, and Mr. Tan Cheng Lock, the Chinese leader for Malacca, was said to have been initiated "as a result of widespread feeling that the domiciled Malayan communities should be prepared to join hands in submitting proposals on the future Malayan constitution".

At about the same time the first anniversary of the Malayan Democratic Union took place. The Vice-President, Mr. John Eber, said that "the Party did not seek to become a mass organisation, but aimed at enrolling active members who were prepared to devote their time and energy in support of the Party's policy. Another aim was to lead the politically inactive middle class to a realisation of the need for Malaya to build up a Party representative of all Malaysians."

The Council of Joint Action appears, therefore, to consist of a mixed bag of Malays disgruntled with the major Malay Party, middle-class Chinese and representatives of other communities. It represents the urban against the rural interest, the federal against the State interest, republicans against constitutionalists; there may be even some communist influence in it. Not only a mixed but an uneasy bag, unlikely to hold together under strain.

The proposals of the Working Committee were published on December 24, 1946, together with a note by the Governor of the Malayan Union; this note stated specifically that His Majesty's Government, in giving their conditional approval to the proposals, have declared that "there can be no question of their reaching any final decisions on any matters involved until all the interested communities in Malaya have had full and free opportunity of

expressing their views". In conformity with this declaration a committee, consisting mainly of influential non-officials from the Malayan communities, has been set up with the object of discovering the views of the various communities, interests and individuals throughout the peninsula. His Majesty's Government will study these views with the greatest care. The government's opinion is that the proposals made by the Working Committee establish the essential foundations of an advance towards self-government, namely, constitutional unity and a bond of common loyalty uniting all those who really feel that they belong to the country. Once the foundations have been laid, then representative government will proceed with all possible speed; but haste is not speed, and a solid foundation is eminently desirable.

Thus the matter now stands. The committee appointed to take the views of the various communities is trying to do so. The Malay Nationalist Party has declared that the plan is unacceptable, that the suggested sovereign status of the Rulers is a mockery and shameless pretence, and that the U.M.N.O. should not be the sole nominating body for Malays. The Council of Joint Action has threatened to stage mass demonstrations to prove that it should be the only representative body in the negotiations. Chinese commercial associations are meeting to formulate their views, as are representatives of the Indian communities. It is to be hoped that there will be no great delay in arriving at a settlement of this question.

Notes

- 1 For the text of the British proposals for Malayan Union, and a discussion of its background, see Victor Purcell, "A Malayan Union: The Proposed New Constitution", *Pacific Affairs*, March 1946, pp. 20-40. See also Gerald Hawkins, "Reactions to the Malayan Union", *ibid.*, September 1946, pp. 279-85.
- 2 This is an interesting development of similar thought in other parts of the Commonwealth where a local as well as a Commonwealth allegiance is being found ever more necessary. Eire and Canada already have citizenship, and it will become increasingly advisable to have local citizenship in the various parts of the Commonwealth as well as the over-all British nationality. Malaya is thus in the vanguard in this respect.

MARKING TIME IN MALAYA

Gerald Hawkins

Source: *International Affairs* 24(1) (1948): 76-88.

The significant feature of Malaya is that it has a plural society. Its six million inhabitants are made up, very approximately, of 42 per cent Malay, 42 per cent Chinese, 13 per cent Indian, 1 per cent European and Eurasian, and the remainder who are Aboriginal, Arab, Filipino, Persian, etc. Any picture of Malaya is unreal that has not this background of Malays, many of whom are foreign to the territory; of Chinese and their provincial sub-divisions; of Indians with their own differentiations of north and south, Hindu and Mohammedan, Pakistan and Hindustan; of "Europeans" who include Americans, Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders, as well as citizens of the United Kingdom, France, Holland, Denmark, etc.; and others who range from wealthy Arabs and Parsees to derelicts of all nations. Till the Japanese occupation there was harmony but not much unity, and political consciousness, though growing, was small. Prior to 1942 the Malay Peninsula had four Federated States and five Unfederated States, four of which were handed over by Siam in 1912. These have now all been "united," and to the ingredients of this Malayan curry are added, besides the two former Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca, the territories, in the vast island of Borneo, of Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo. Isolated from the Union, at the extreme southernmost tip of the Peninsula, lies the island of Singapore, one of the world's seaports, which is so westernized and modernized as to be sophisticated and, in its different mental climate, surveys the rest of Malaya with a certain superiority and condescension. To understand such harmony as existed before the war it is necessary to look at the historical background.

Popular ideas about Malaya must be "debunked." There still prevails a misconception that Singapore is the "Sink of the East," and Malaya a tropical eldorado, or a golden Chersonese, inhabited by mysterious Chinese, by Malays who run amok, and by "whiskey-swilling" planters who manage to wrest fortunes from the green hells of tropical jungles. We in Malaya have no

rhetorical history. The sober truth is that we are as dully respectable as other people. Up to 1875 the Peninsula was split into numerous independent States whose predatory chiefs waged perpetual war on one another. Lying across the most convenient route from China to India and forming one side of the Malacca Straits, Malaya became, willy nilly, a trading area. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Crown colonies of Penang, Malacca and Singapore were trading centres where order had been established. These trading stations were operated by the East India Company which was interested only in trade and almost completely indifferent to the general welfare of the people. Edmund Burke had originated his doctrine of trusteeship, but "John Company" (to this day the Government is known to the Malay as "Kumpani") was too busy to listen. It warned its representatives to mind their own business and keep aloof from local contacts. One of the Company's servants who held different views was reprimanded as a "very reckless young scape-grace who had capitulated his soul to the devil and turned curst Mahometan."

By one of those happy accidents that have enabled the British Empire to survive, Stamford Raffles arrived in Malaya at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Though a member of a commercial concern of which the first aim was profit he had an astonishing liberalism of mind. Lord Elton calls him "one of the greatest of British administrators and the first of any nation to turn science and humanitarianism to bettering the lot of a native population."¹ He inspired the first Rajah Brooke of Sarawak whose unusual quality as a ruler was his habit of "treating the natives as equals, not only equals before the law but in society." While the trading settlements thrived, the hinterland was the prey of oppression and misrule. Tin had been discovered. It was worked by Chinese whose rival secret societies turned disorder into chaos. In Kuala Lumpur only eighty years ago its "Capitan China," Yap Ah Loy, maintained some sort of order by paying out ten dollars each for the gory heads of his enemies in the Selangor civil war. Such chaos was resolved when the Sultans accepted a British Resident who would "teach them the art of administration." Residents were appointed whose task it was to "give advice which must be acted upon in all matters except those touching Malay religion and custom." The greatest of all Residents, Sir Hugh Low, drew his inspiration from Raffles via Rajah Brooke. He set up indirect rule, sponsored the rubber industry and created a peaceful and prosperous State.

Treaties to accept British Residents were made independently with each sovereign Sultan and his chiefs, a point which is most important in connection with the latest engagements, the White Papers of 1946 and 1947.² The logic of events and economic necessity made it inevitable that the politically undeveloped Malays, who wanted to be taught but were slow learners, could not keep step with the growing complexities of government. More and more of the administration became entangled in red tape which could be unravelled only by British officials and their Indian assistants. The Chinese

whose interests were almost entirely in trade and commerce remained aloof. They wanted law and order and a good government, and were content with that. The Malays wanted to be *senang*. For a single word there can be none more expressive than *senang*. It means "comfortable," "easy"; but it signifies much more than comfort and ease in physical circumstances. It is the Malays' psychological reaction to the nervous tension of tropical life, where worry, hustle, energy and the craze for perfection have low survival value.

Under an honest and benevolent bureaucracy Malaya flourished. Its exports and imports were about three-sevenths of the total of all the other British Crown colonies and far surpassed the total for the African colonies. The enormous profits from tin and rubber made it possible to build out of revenue a railway, an excellent road system, schools in every village and a health service second to none in the East. Standards of living rose, and wages, though by American and British standards low, were well in advance of any neighbouring country.

Society, however, is an organism and political indifference is shed as society becomes more mature. Attempts at democratization and decentralization were made but did not go far enough to satisfy a growing body of men who wanted a greater share of responsibility in government. The Raffles principle of freedom had encouraged immigrants from all over the world to settle in Malaya. Their labour and capital were necessary to develop the resources of the country but they had no feeling of identity with, or citizenship of the new country. Immigrants, British, Indian, Chinese, Indonesian, came, acquired a very considerable fortune, and returned in most cases to their home country. If they remained in the Straits Settlements, the old name for Penang, Malacca and Singapore, their children, born there, automatically became British subjects. If they settled in other parts of Malaya their children born there became "British Protected Persons," a status that seems to defy legal definition and to confer quite unknown rights and duties.

The rapid fall of Singapore in 1942, "the greatest disaster in British military history," has been attributed to various causes. There were certainly technical reasons. Malaya lacked the means of defence, ships, guns, aeroplanes. Military strategy has been blamed for bad disposition of troops and absence of lines of defence. Others declare that the failure was due to deeper causes. "There was no common bond of love of country or pride of race but the whole four communities were loosely knit by ties of business interest. Money was the God, nothing else mattered but money." This is vigorously denied. Malaya was not organized for the fostering of local patriotism and militarism. Malaya was repeatedly told that its best service was to produce tin and rubber, as this contributed to the dollar exchange. More could perhaps have been done in the local manufacture of weapons, in the utilization of labour for defence works, and in the training of citizen armies. A common citizenship would have undoubtedly stiffened resistance, for many regarded Malaya not as the object of their loyalties but as the source of their royalties.

The Japanese occupation from 1942 till 1945 accelerated the tempo of development to political consciousness. The war was being fought for democracy. Why should not Malaya have a democracy? The return of the British was rapturously welcomed, and the general goodwill shown was a happy augury. Democracy, prosperity and the four freedoms were just round the corner. In an uninspired moment the Home Government sent out Sir Harold MacMichael to negotiate new treaties with the Sultans.³ There were nine Sultans and all of them had, as one of them expressed it, "the implicit faith in England that a child has for its father." They were more or less independent sovereigns who had treaties with Britain. Obviously to fit nine independent Sultans into a democracy was somewhat difficult; it should have been possible, however, to federate and "stream-line" the administration. But Sir Harold, in a lightning tour of Malaya, secured the signatures of the Sultans, and made, not a federation, but a union under which the Sultans lost their independence. The country took instant alarm. The Malays, never before vocal, formed large societies, held meetings, processions and demonstrations in every town and even spoke of country-wide non-co-operation. They exhibited placards "Pro-British but not Pro-Union," and asked what they had done that they should lose their independence and be treated like a conquered people. They coined a new word into their language, "Mac-Michaelize" meaning "to cheat by false statements." Some Malays went so far as to suggest disowning their Sultans, an action which amazed everyone with any knowledge of a race which holds loyalty as the highest of virtues, and *dêrhaka*, treason, the blackest of all crimes. The instant opposition and the prompt mobilization of the Malays afforded a second surprise to those who regard them as bone idle and incapable of acting with vigour and in concert. The Malay, when roused, can and does display great energy. Nor is he an irredeemable individualist. As a Mahomedan he belongs to a wonderful social democracy. He is by nature a rice planter, and rice-growing is essentially a co-operative enterprise. Moreover a Government Co-operative Department has for over twenty years been teaching him quite successfully the advantages of joint endeavour for a common aim.

The original White Paper proposals were:⁴

- (1) the creation of a Malayan Union which would comprise the nine Malay States, and the British settlements of Penang and Malacca;
- (2) the establishment of a form of common citizenship to include all, irrespective of race, who regard Malaya as their true home and the object of their loyalty;
- (3) the separation for a time of Singapore Island.

Strong opposition to these proposals was raised not only in Malaya but also in the British Parliament. The British Government maintained its adherence to the two fundamental principles, the establishment of a strong central

government, and the introduction of a form of common citizenship, but reopened the matter and called into consultation Their Highnesses the Rulers and the leaders of Malay public opinion in the hope that the Union could be modified to suit Malay objections.

A working Committee was appointed by a Conference of His Excellency the Governor of the Malayan Union, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States and the Representatives of the United Malays National Organization, and in January 1947 submitted a report which substituted for the Malayan Union a new constitution in federal form.⁵ Certain general principles were taken as the basis of discussions; these were:

- (1) that there should be a strong central government to ensure economic and effective administration;
- (2) that the individuality of the States and Settlements should be maintained;
- (3) that the new arrangements should offer the means of ultimate self-government;
- (4) that a common form of citizenship should be introduced which would enable political rights to be extended to all those who regard Malaya as their real home;⁶
- (5) that the Malays occupy a special position and possess rights which must be safeguarded.

The Committee suggested that the Legislative Council should consist of three *ex officio* members, eleven official members, eleven Presidents and Representatives from State and Settlement Councils, and twenty-three unofficial representatives (Labour 2, Planting 2, Mining 2, Commerce 3, Malays 9, Settlements of Penang and Malacca 2, Eurasian Community 1, Educational and Cultural Interests 1, and one unallocated member). There would thus be fourteen officials and thirty-four unofficials.

A Consultative Committee on the Constitutional Proposals was then set up by the Governor of the Malayan Union composed mainly of influential representatives of non-Malay communities to test public reaction to the plan.⁷ It held meetings in the four largest towns, collected evidence, and on March 21, 1947, issued a report. It recommended twenty-three official members in a Legislative Council of seventy-five with an unofficial majority of twenty-nine, and a reduction in the qualifying period for citizenship to five years for those born in the Federation, and eight years for those born outside the Federation. Its final recommendation stressed the need for stable government as soon as possible in the interests of the country generally as well as in the interests of trade and industry. The reception of that report, known as the "Cheeseman Report," was mixed.

Ever since, the Government has had to attempt to allay suspicion. The Chinese who slightly outnumber the Malays and far surpass them in wealth,

energy and rate of reproduction, also have misgivings. A Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action, now called the All Malayan Council of Joint Action (A.M.C.J.A.), was established. Its membership is open to all and includes many distinguished citizens mostly Chinese, but Indian, Eurasian and Indonesian as well. The Malayan Democratic Union raised several political and economic issues and added more discord to an orchestra sadly in need of a capable conductor.

In these days it savours of blasphemy to impugn democracy. Nevertheless a large number of people feel grave doubts over this imposed democracy. An underlying difficulty of democracy is that it requires a highly developed civic sense. Its adoption in the Far East must be slow and painful because of age-long custom and tradition which are diametrically opposed to it. While the European is an individualist who does not find it an impossibility to extend civic responsibilities to the State, the Easterner has for centuries tended to look on the family as the limit of his liability. His family includes even his most distant cousins, and the family system which has conferred immense benefits as a stabilizing factor makes the projection of loyalty to a remote State a step which many find too far to take. A really active government is regarded as a visitation, like cholera, of a mysterious and very unpleasant kind. The most that can be hoped for is a providential immunity from its incidence. No sane man would expect, much less accept, an invitation to make it endemic.

The more extreme of the opposition mobilized itself in the Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action. It conducted a vigorous and well-organized campaign and boycotted the Consultative Committee, an unfortunate decision, which made the task of that body in gauging public reactions and in collecting evidence and suggestions for improvements still more difficult. Its destructive criticisms were facile enough. Its attacks on the political theory at the back of the federation proposal were confined to detail and few constructive proposals were made. They stigmatized the scheme as undemocratic and retrograde in nature and conception, and incompatible with the attainment of the promised self-government. Three demands were put forward, comprising:

- (1) A united Malaya, including Singapore.
- (2) Responsible self-government through a fully elected central legislature for the whole of Malaya.
- (3) Equal citizenship rights for all who make Malaya their permanent home and the object of their undivided loyalty.

It seems reasonable enough on paper, but "how far," ask the Malays, "is this practicable?" The inclusion of Singapore will, they fear, upset not only the racial balance in the Union, but also their economic interests. The Malayan Union is economically a primary producer of raw materials, tin, rubber, and

to a much less extent, coconut oil, copra, timber, tapioca, pineapples and spices. It exports these through Singapore and asserts that Singapore is an entrepôt with commercial and industrial interests which conflict with those of the primary producer. Self-government through a fully elected central legislature takes time to introduce, and a rapidly adopted democracy has not such a conspicuous record of success in Asia or Europe to justify its immediate introduction, besides involving a dispersion of time and labour required for economic rehabilitation. They need to experiment first by giving the franchise to electors of municipalities and Town Boards and quote Mr. Herbert Morrison's remark about the unwisdom of giving a child of ten a latch-key, a gun and a cheque book.

The Malays noted with a cynical smile a "regrettable incident" in the Singapore Municipality in July 1947. There was a proposal to make the Commissioners elective by the vote of the rate-payers. The report on the proposal was secret and when it came up for decision before the Commissioners the proceedings were secret. But the news of the session leaked out and it was reported two days later in the local press that only five of the twenty-three Commissioners voted for elections. The remainder upheld the principle by which leading unofficials were nominated by the Government. Nor have the Malays much confidence that non-Malays will really feel undivided loyalty or make a permanent home in Malaya. They have seen some of the most promising students who have profited from State Scholarships accept appointments as civil servants in Ceylon and as doctors in China. Some great nations have been born of the fusion of many peoples, but immigrant races in Malaya remain obstinately disparate. In Malaya, where marriages are still arranged by parents and professional marriage brokers, Indians, Chinese and Malays inter-marry rarely. Differences in religion, customs, culture and character keep the races apart. The Chinese have been in Malacca and have remained as a separate and very intelligent community, the *Babas*, for 500 years. The descendants of the first European conquerors, the Portuguese, still form a distinct class in Malacca. Nor is there much hope of rival nationalism dying down. Indians domiciled in Malaya still follow closely the progress of India to self-government and conducted enthusiastic demonstrations throughout Malaya on August 15, 1947. They are by no means anxious to cut their ties with India. Pandit Nehru, whose highest characteristic is his passion for logic and intellectual sincerity, warned the Indians that they could not be both Indian and Malayan. They must choose one or the other. The Chinese, essentially a practical people, intend to make, and take, the best of both worlds. A Singapore newspaper, the *Nan Chiau*, organized a questionnaire among its readers. Four thousand, three hundred and forty-four replies were received but, as there was no system of selection, deductions drawn from the results cannot be too accurate. A Gallup Poll or similar test would be very valuable. The figures obtained from this questionnaire are none the less remarkable. Six persons did not want to be Malayan citizens, 38

were ready to give up their Chinese citizenship and become Malayan citizens, 4,275 wanted to become Malayan citizens and yet retain their Chinese citizenship. Thus 99 per cent of the Chinese, in the only test so far made, would not give undivided loyalty to the Malayan Union.

Criticisms of the new constitution in federal form recommended by the Working Committee have lacked precision. The chief charges levelled against it are that it provides no real advance to democracy. It is argued that no bill to amend the constitution can be introduced without the prior approval of His Majesty and the Conference of Rulers, and that this will much retard progress to self-government. It is further objected that there is no organic connection between the Executive Council and the Legislative Council, and that the Executive Council shows no signs of being capable of expansion into a ministerial system with any collective Cabinet responsibility.

The qualifications for citizenship were attacked as being too severely restrictive, and a recommendation to follow the United States procedure was made so that they would require:

- (1) five years ordinary residence;
- (2) willingness to make a declaration of permanent settlement;
- (3) willingness to take a citizenship oath.

But it is not only the Malays who are unwilling to make the acquirement of citizenship easier. A considerable body of the most advanced and progressive class in Malaya, the local-born Chinese, point out that divided loyalties are impossible, and that any ordinary person can become a naturalized British subject if he wants to, and that British citizenship is a privilege not to be lightly or automatically conferred on every new-comer.

The Malay party represented at the Working Committee was the United Malays National Organization (U.M.N.O.). This body, having in its ranks the leading and more highly educated middle-class Malays, is the largest and most influential of the Malay parties. But, though it was the only one present, it is by no means the only Malay party. U.M.N.O. seeks a situation not markedly different from the *status quo ante bellum*. The lesser parties hold other views. Already before the war there had grown up a mild republicanism which looked askance at the privileges of Malay royalty, and the nepotism which, in government service, sometimes gave to relatives of Rajas, preference over commoners of equal and even superior ability. But it was very mild indeed, and the more radical Malay parties have in their membership strong foreign Malay (or Indonesian) elements. These advanced groups have fused into a People's United Front, called "Putera," to which are affiliated the Malay Nationalist Party, A.P.I. (Malay Youth Corps, now outlawed), G.E.R.A.M. (Malay Students Movement), A.W.A.S. (Malay Women's League) and certain other groups. "Putera" has thrown in its lot with the Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action and advocates that everyone born in

Malaya should be a Malayan citizen and that all Malayan citizens should have equal rights. The Malayan Democratic Union backs the A.M.C.J.A. It consists of the left-wing intelligentsia, produces many admirably factual letters and articles but has not yet found its feet. The colour of its politics is pale pink and it advocates constitutional methods. Properly led, it may become a powerful force, but at the moment it has extremist allies who influence its policy, and are lessening its prestige. Its members are the Malayan-born and a good number are graduates of British universities. Common opposition makes strange bed-fellows and the M.D.U., which emphasizes the claims of the local-born, may find it hard to divorce most of its associates who have affiliations with other countries.

The Communist Party of today appears to have little or nothing in common with the pre-war party. As usual the Communists, though negligible in numbers, are by no means negligible in influence. As a party it has great skill in the baser political arts and has infiltrated into many trade unions. The rapid introduction of trade unionism among masses of labourers with small experience of negotiation, and still smaller sense of discipline provided a happy hunting ground for the Communists and wonderful scope for manipulation. The party managed to form a federation of unions and sometimes openly and sometimes under cover foments unrest and discontent. There is trouble enough from criminal gangs who learnt methods of violence during the Japanese régime, acquired a good supply of arms and ammunition, and now live by extortion and intimidation. Members of the Communist Party appear also to be recruited almost entirely from alien immigrants who whip up support for their partisans in China and Indonesia, and make confusion worse confounded; the addition of issues such as Kuomintang versus Communism, and republicanism in Indonesia, with the implied division of loyalties, cause distraction and a regrettable dispersion of effort which could profitably be devoted to the solution of domestic problems clamouring for attention. The so-called Communists in Malaya today have shown greatest activity in the field of labour. They have, however, shown fair interest in politics and are known to be involved in an attempt to boycott the Singapore elections. They hope to achieve this by warning and even by threatening the members of trade unions who wish to register as voters. They threaten also to boycott the poll. So far, however, these threats and attempted boycott are without noticeable effect.

The reconvened Working Committee considered the amendments put forward by the Consultative Committee and reported on them to a plenary Conference of Rulers and other Malay representatives.

In July 1947 the revised constitutional proposals, put forward by the Home Government and based on the scheme which has finally emerged from these various consultations, were published;⁸ they may be looked on as an acceptable compromise, and the Federation should come into existence early in 1948. The British Government feels that the proposals will meet the

present needs of the people and will provide that stable basis for further political development which the country so urgently requires. The summarized proposals are:

- (1) New State agreements will be made with the Rulers and a Federation will be formed.
- (2) The British Government will control defence and all the external affairs of the Federation.
- (3) The States will be governed in accordance with the provisions of a written constitution which is to conform with the State and Federation agreements.
- (4) The High Commissioner will be responsible for the protection of the rights of any Malay State or Settlement, and of the rights, powers and dignity of the Rulers, for the prevention of any grave menace to peace and tranquillity, for the safeguarding of financial stability and public credit, for safeguarding the special position of the Malays, and of the legitimate interests of other communities.
- (5) The High Commissioner will have an Executive Council (3 *ex officio* members, not less than 4 official members, not less than 5 or more than 7 unofficials), and a Legislative Council of whom 50 will be nominated unofficials. Those 50 seats will be allocated as follows: Labour 6, Planting 6, Mining 4, Commerce 6, Agriculture and husbandry 8, Professional, educational and cultural 4, Settlements 2, States 9, Eurasian, Ceylonese and Indian Communities 1 each, and Chinese 2. "This allocation, which is made mainly on a non-racial basis, would be likely to give Malays 22 seats and Chinese 14 seats, whilst Indians would have 5, Europeans 7, Ceylonese 1 and Eurasians 1."⁹ The High Commissioner will have a reserved power to give effect to a bill or motion which has not been passed by the Council, if he considers that it is in the interests of public order, public faith or good government. The official languages of the Council will be English and Malay.
- (6) The question of the inclusion of Singapore in the Federation is left open, to be considered on its merits and in the light of local opinion at an appropriate time.
- (7) Elections in the Federation will be introduced as soon as circumstances permit.
- (8) Federal citizenship may be acquired automatically or on application. The following persons will *automatically* be Federal citizens:
 - (i) Any subject of the Ruler of any State.
 - (ii) A British subject born at any time in either of the Settlements, who is permanently resident (that is to say has completed a continuous period of fifteen years residence) anywhere in the territories to be comprised in the Federation. (This provision varies from that originally recommended by the Working Committee in that residence

anywhere in the Federation, and not in either of the Settlements alone, will qualify.)

- (iii) Any British subject born at any time in any of the territories now to be comprised in the Federation whose father, either
 - (a) was himself born in any of these territories; or
 - (b) has resided there for a continuous period of not less than fifteen years.
- (iv) Any person born in the territories who habitually speaks Malay and conforms to Malay custom.
- (v) Any other person born in any of the territories both of whose parents were born in any of the territories and have been resident for a continuous period of not less than fifteen years.
- (vi) Any person whose father at the date of that person's birth was a federal citizen.

Federal citizenship can be acquired *by application* by a person who satisfies the High Commissioner that either he was born in any of the territories and has lived for not less than eight out of the preceding twelve years in the territories, or has been in residence in the territories for not less than fifteen out of the twenty years immediately preceding his application. (The Working Committee recommended in the first case ten out of fifteen years. The Consultative Committee considered that this period, and the period of fifteen out of twenty years in the case of those not born in the Federation were excessive and recommended five out of ten years and eight out of fifteen years respectively.) Applicants must satisfy the High Commissioner that they are of good character, have an adequate knowledge of Malay, have made a declaration of permanent settlement, and are willing to take the oath of citizenship.

The reception of these revised proposals has been mildly favourable. The *Straits Times*, having headed its leader "Birth of a Nation?", declares that opinion on either side will be far from completely satisfied.¹⁰ The *London Times*, after pointing out that the defects of the original scheme were due to haste and a reluctance to consult local opinion, adds that initial mistakes have been rectified and good central government is being established.¹¹ The Sultan of Kedah, hitherto the State most opposed to the Union, has given it his blessing. Some of the Chinese are not yet convinced and organized in the various towns on October 20, 1947, a one-day "hartal" as an indication of protest. The "hartal" was Malaya-wide and without "incidents," but it was not universally observed. All European and many Indian businesses remained open; it stopped the work of daily-paid labourers who were vulnerable to intimidation. But the general public accepts the scheme and is prepared to sacrifice much for the sake of stability, especially as the scheme has seminal ideas in it. Given goodwill and forbearance, the new venture may prove a success.

The situation in Malaya was never darker and the only faintly glimmering star of hope is the fundamental common sense and respect for realities that distinguish Malays and Chinese. British statesmanship has to handle here, *in petto*, problems as difficult as Lord Durham's in Canada, and must exhibit the same patience, the same breadth of view and the same boldness of imagination. It must develop some bond of national unity in the plural society.

The Malays fear the economic power of the Chinese. They see no reason why, in their own country, they should be thrust aside by the Chinese who breed faster, work harder, monopolize the distributive trades and share with Europeans the production of tin. The Chinese not unreasonably assert that, since their capital, labour and skill have made Malaya one of the richest countries in the world, they have a right to some sort of "say" in the government.

Economically the country is facing disaster. Tin, because of the impossibility of obtaining machinery, is producing at less than half capacity. Rubber is sold for less than it was before the war, and appears to be the only commodity in the whole world that is now in long supply. Malaya has enjoyed a high standard of living by being able to export tin and rubber, and to buy its staple food, rice, cheaply. Its exports are at pre-war prices; its imports of rice, textiles and machinery are not. Labour costs entrepreneurs three, four, even seven times its previous wages. In economic language the terms of trade have moved sharply against Malaya. A pound of rubber in 1947 will buy one-fifth of the rice, one-fourth of the flour, one-half of the milk, and one-sixth of the textiles that it could buy before the war. Government reserves have been tapped to exhaustion in rehabilitation, and the budget shows an alarming deficit. There is a risk of inflation; revenue is down, expenditure up. Nevertheless government departments and staffs have increased.

The rice situation is unsatisfactory. Malaya has rationed itself consistently and so severely that the *per capita* ration of the staple food is less than that of any other country in Asia. It is considerably less than the ration in Japan. Production from its own lands is increasing, but only the wildest optimism believes that more than 45 per cent of the necessary supplies of rice can be grown locally and distributed fairly. Rice has increased 400 per cent in price and the curve of the cost of living index resembles, to an astonishing degree of closeness, the curve of the price of rice. Smuggling over the Siamese border, non-co-operation of the general public, and ineffective price-control aggravate the situation. Consumer goods are arriving in sufficient quantities, but rice is in lamentably short supply and has caused much discontent and is the basis of labour unrest. Until Malaya receives adequate if not plentiful supplies of her staple food at a reasonable price she cannot prosper nor progress.

There the matter rests. Statesmanship has evolved a workable solution to the political problem; administration has to grapple with more practical

problems. The atmosphere of goodwill, so necessary to the fulfilment of the statesman's hopes of a stable government with a unified populace, will never be generated so long as every rice-eater has to traffic in the black market to replenish his half empty rice bowl, embittered the while with the thought that he is being cheated and robbed of even the simplest blessings of peace. Before the war administration was a relatively simple matter of maintaining law and order, providing schools and medical services and communications. Many social services and reforms have now been initiated, but, as there is apparently no money to finance these schemes, overhauling and pruning will be necessary. These likewise are not the avenues of approach to true progress and have been explored somewhat in advance of the opportune moment.

Some synthesis of races and cultures is possible and necessary. Nationalism is still a fiery force that has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished. The palmy days of nationalism were in the nineteenth century, and its too abundant growth in the twentieth culminated in the absurdities as well as the crimes of Nazism and fascism. A world contracting daily through the discoveries of science cannot suffer the fevers of exaggerated nationalism. But a restrained nationalism will add colour and light to a drab and standardized existence, and the fabric of a world culture will be enriched by national strands if these can be harmoniously inter-woven. The polyglot Malayan Federation is a challenge to human reason and goodwill.

Notes

- 1 *Imperial Commonwealth* (London, Collins, 1945), p. 266.
- 2 *Malayan Union and Singapore*, Statement of Policy on Future Constitution, Cmd. 6724 (London, H.M.S.O., January 1946). *Federation of Malaya*, Summary of Revised Constitutional Proposals, Cmd. 7171 (London, H.M.S.O., July 1947).
- 3 See *Report on a Mission to Malaya*, by Sir Harold MacMichael, Colonial No. 194 (London, H.M.S.O., 1946).
- 4 Cmd. 6724.
- 5 *Constitutional Proposals for Malaya*, Report of the Working Committee appointed by a Conference of His Excellency the Governor of the Malayan Union, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States and the Representatives of the United Malays National Organization (Kuala Lumpur, December 1946).
- 6 "The form of citizenship proposed under the new Constitution is not a nationality . . . [it] is an addition to, not a subtraction from, nationality . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 7 *Constitutional Proposals for Malaya*, Report of the Consultative Committee (Kuala Lumpur, 1947).
- 8 Cmd. 7171.
- 9 Cmd. 7171, p. 7.
- 10 July 25, 1947.
- 11 July 25, 1947.

THE COMMUNIST UPRISING IN MALAYA

Ian Morrison

Source: *Far Eastern Survey* 17(24) (1948): 281-6.

The communist insurrection in Malaya will be six months old by the end of this year. Two questions are frequently asked in connection with it: What is its relation to communist uprisings elsewhere in South East Asia? And why and when did the Malayan Communist Party decide to resort to direct action?

The answers are bound to be speculative in character, for no direct sources of information are available. The central executive committee of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), its high command, has always been an ultra-secret underground body, even during the postwar period when the party was a legal organization. The party was proscribed immediately after the insurrection and is now likely to remain so far a long time to come.

It has become a popular assumption that the change of "line" of the communist parties in South East Asia dates from conferences in Calcutta in February and March 1948. There were three conferences, held more or less concurrently: a conference of the Indian Communist Party; a conference of New Democratic Youth Leagues; and a South East Asia Students Conference. Representatives from all of the countries of the Far East attended. The Russians sent a number of delegates on diplomatic passports.

After the conferences communist risings occurred in three South East Asian countries. In March the Burma Communist Party (the White Flag Communists) held an important conference at Pinyinana, and on April 1 revolted against the government headed by Thakin Nu.¹ Two of their leaders, Than Tun and the Indian Goshal, had been at Calcutta. In June the Malayan Communists took up arms against the government. In September occurred the attempted communist coup in Java.² A more extreme line was being taken by the Indonesian Communists as early as March, but it seems to have been the arrival from Europe in July of Soeripno and the Moscow-trained Moeso

which actually precipitated the rising, although neither of these men had been at Calcutta.

No similar risings occurred in the other two countries of South East Asia—Siam and Indochina—because in Siam communism is still comparatively weak and is confined almost entirely to the Chinese minority, while in Indochina the Communists, from within the national coalition, have been pursuing a policy of direct action against the French ever since the attempted coup in Tonkin on December 19, 1946. By contrast with the Indonesians, the Indochina Communists, following the principles long ago enunciated by Ho Chi Minh, have resisted the temptation to split the national coalition and have continued to put the struggle for national liberation before the class struggle.

The MCP sent only one delegate to Calcutta (reportedly because of lack of funds), a young man called Lee Soong, who in 1947 was one of two Malayan delegates to the big youth rally in Prague. The man who is believed to have been mainly responsible for informing the Malayan communist leaders of the decisions and sentiments of the Calcutta conferees is Lawrence Sharkey, a member of the central committee of the Australian Communist Party, who spent two weeks in Singapore on his way back to Australia from Calcutta and is known to have had meetings with the MCP leaders. The *Sydney Tribune*, an Australian communist paper, on August 14 quoted Sharkey as saying that it had been obvious to him at his meetings with the MCP leaders that the Malayan situation was very critical. He reported having told the MCP that, in order to prevent the old colonial slavery from being again imposed on them, a struggle for national independence was justified, but such questions as to when or whether they should start an armed insurrection were matters that could be decided only by the Malaysians themselves; they were much better qualified than he because of the great experience which they had gained in their heroic struggle against the Japanese invaders.

Communist strength within unions

The following are some of the outstanding internal developments in Malaya during the months preceding the insurrection, as they affected the MCP.

1. Ever since the end of the war it had been the strategy of the Malayan Communists to seek political control of Malaya through gaining control of labor. Immediately after the war they hurriedly formed a whole multitude of trade unions, covering every field of labor, from tappers on rubber estates to taxi-dancers in Singapore's cabarets. They infiltrated their members into the offices of the older unions; they formed federations of unions for each of the nine Malay States; they also formed a General Labor Union embracing the whole country. When they had difficulty in getting the latter registered, as its constitution did not comply with the separate regulations of the two governments (Malaya and Singapore having been constitutionally separate since

the end of the war), they created a Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions with headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, and a Singapore Federation of Trade Unions with headquarters in Singapore.

These various federations of trade unions became the main instruments of the Malayan Communists in their struggle for control of labor. They did not scruple to use intimidation and strong-arm methods, effective weapons in a country whose people, especially the Chinese sections, are traditionally compliant with the demands of extortioners and protection racketeers. The degree to which the Communists were successful is shown by the fact that at the time of the insurrection (and the figures were about the same at the end of 1947), out of 301 trade unions in the Malayan Federation,³ it was estimated that 127, with a membership of 79,975, were under communist control; 61, with a membership of 13,180, were doubtful; and 113, with a membership of 54,440, were independent. In other words, the Communists were believed to control more than a third of the unions on the mainland and more than half of the labor force. But it was still not enough to enable them to achieve their ends. At the end of 1947, they were making much slower progress in the labor field, and were losing some of that momentum which is essential to every revolutionary movement.

British attitude towards unions

As is brought out very clearly in a recent report on Malaya's trade unions by two veteran British trade unionists who came out in February 1948 to survey Malaya's unions,⁴ it has been the policy of the British government to encourage a vigorous trade-union movement in postwar Malaya. Such a movement, it was fully realized, could not help becoming partially political in character. The government has, however, tried to prevent it from becoming a field for revolutionary political activity by a party using force and threats rather than normal democratic methods. The government's Trade Union Adviser, Mr. Jack Brazier, formerly a member of the executive committee of the (British) National Union of Railwaymen, while trying to give guidance and the benefit of British union experience to the movement as a whole, has also concentrated on building up a few key unions along what in the West would be regarded as sound democratic lines. There is no doubt that these unions have obtained more for their members in the way of better conditions of employment than have the communist-controlled unions, whose members have received hardly commensurate returns for the heavy monetary contributions and frequent stoppages of work insisted on by the communist union leaders.

2. Another important internal development took place towards the end of 1947 when certain changes were made in the personnel of the high command of the MCP similar to changes in the Indian Communist Party and in some of the other South East Asian Communist parties. The more cautious old-time leaders, now branded as "rightist opportunists," who were prepared

to try to exploit existing conditions to their advantage, were losing control of the party and were being supplanted by a younger and more extreme type.

3. When the writer visited the Malayan Federation in December 1947, it was evident that the MCP was shorter of funds than it had been at any time since the end of the war. The Registrar of Trade Unions was tightening up the machinery for inspection of union accounts. Affiliation fees payable by any one union to a federation were being limited to ten per cent of its revenue from membership dues. Early in 1948 the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions ceased to exist when the Registrar declined to register it on the ground that there was nothing in the Trade Union Ordinance providing for what was in effect a federation of federations. (Its demise is estimated to have cost the MCP a monthly income of Malayan \$40,000, equivalent to US \$20,000.) Other measures to reduce the scope of labor organization for exploitation by the MCP were under discussion, as was well known to the communist leaders. The most notable of these was an amendment to the Trade Union Ordinance, finally enacted on June 12, 1948, which contained the following provisions: (a) no federations of unions to be permitted except within the same industry; (b) no man to be an official of a union (except in the office of secretary) who has not worked in the industry for three years; (c) no man to be an official who has ever been convicted of extortion or any other serious crime.

Communist reverses in Singapore

4. Finally, during the first half of 1948, the MCP suffered a series of reverses in Singapore. Early in January the Singapore Harbor Board determined to abolish the old system of contract labor and to institute a system of direct employment, a change which has since greatly increased output and reduced costs. It was decided to make the change early in February, immediately after the Chinese New Year. When the change was announced, the Singapore Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the main instrument through which the MCP sought to control Singapore's labor, tried to exploit the situation to its own ends and called a strike. But since the abolition of the contract system had always been one of the main planks in its platform, it found itself in a false position. The strike was settled by an agreement in which the SFTU leaders accepted the change on condition that two months were taken to put it into effect, and in return they gave a promise of two months of industrial peace. They kept their promise and there were no disturbances in the dock area between February 5 and April 5. But the SFTU was not idle during these months: it used the time to prepare a big strike which would affect both the harbor and the roads. It must be appreciated that the port has always been the primary objective of subversive elements in Singapore. If the island's trade could be brought to a standstill, that alone

might bring about the chaos up-country which would give the MCP its big opportunity.

The workers' protection corps

On April 12 leaflets and posters inciting to bloodshed and violence were found in the Harbor Board area. The government decided that a serious situation existed and issued banishment warrants against the Chinese section of the communist-controlled Singapore Harbor Union which had issued the leaflets and posters. Some arrests were made and the premises of the union were raided. Here the police found a complete list of the active members of an organization called the Singapore Workers' Protection Corps, which was in effect the strong-arm branch of the MCP in Singapore. As this Corps was an illegal organization in that it has not been registered under the Societies Ordinance, the police had the power to arrest all active members without warrant. Several of the leaders were arrested and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

In spite of this action, the SFTU continued, by violence and intimidation, to try to prevent the dock laborers from remaining at work. On April 26 and 27 two hand-grenades were thrown at laborers in the dock area. Once again the police acted promptly. They caught one of the men who had thrown grenades and they continued their arrests of prominent members of the Workers' Protection Corps. The list of names and descriptions was produced in court and this had the effect of causing the entire corps to dissolve. Those of its members who had not been arrested either went underground or fled up-country. In consequence, when the MCP declared war on the government its main weapon in Singapore no longer existed. To this breaking up of the Workers' Protection Corps, and to the fact that Singapore does not have the dense jungle where outlaws can hide, must be attributed the island's freedom from the terrorism which has gripped the peninsula.

The Communists received another setback in connection with their plans for a big demonstration on May Day. Early in April the SFTU applied to the government for permission to hold a mammoth assembly in Farrer Park, to be followed by a procession through the city. Since in the previous year the procession had got out of hand and had developed an extremely hostile character, the government decided to permit the assembly but not the procession. On April 28 the assistant secretary of the SFTU addressed a communication to the Colonial Secretary, stating that the SFTU proposed to hold the procession regardless of the ban and that any disturbances which might result would be solely the responsibility of the government. The government promptly banned the assembly as well as the procession. Elaborate precautions were taken on May Day, large numbers of police were moved into potential danger spots, troops were held in reserve, and the day passed off without incident. Largely because attention was focused on the trial of

strength between the government and the MCP in Singapore, the day passed quietly in the Federation as well. It is significant that shortly after May 1 a number of prominent communist and labor leaders in Singapore disappeared up-country. Amongst them were Veraseenan, the Indian President of the SFTU, and Chan Ming-ching, Singapore representative of the MCP.

Early in May there was trouble in some of the rubber factories on Singapore island similar to the preparatory disturbances which preceded the insurrection up-country. On May 10 the Bin Seng rubber factory was burned down, there being strong suggestions of arson. Sit-down strikes were organized at other factories. The Singapore police again acted firmly. At the Tai Tong factory, for example, they turned up in considerable strength, and arrested 140 men for trespassing, of whom thirty, regarded as ringleaders, were shortly afterwards sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Increase in strikes

The following figures not only illustrate the degree to which the MCP was using the trade union movement as a political instrument in its struggle for power but also strongly suggest that, whether or not by the end of April the leaders had decided on direct action, they had certainly determined to intensify greatly their activity. On April 1 substantial rises in wages throughout the planting industry were promulgated by the Malayan Planting Industries Employers Association, a body that might be described as a trade union of employers, which had held its inaugural meeting in Kuala Lumpur on September 27, 1947. These rates were based on recommendations made by the Joint Wages Commission appointed by the governments of the Federation and Singapore. Normally an advance in rates on this scale would have ensured a period of peaceful and harmonious cooperation between employers and employees. But whereas 12,773 man-days were lost through strikes in April, no less than 179,539 man-days were lost in May. Moreover, the disturbances were most acute on the big estates, like those of the Dunlop Rubber Company and the Socfin Company, where conditions of housing and employment are the best in Malaya. (As soon as the insurrection began, the strikes started to collapse, owing to the disappearance of the Communists and of most of the more militant labor leaders. Since July 14 there have been only two small stoppages of work. A further factor was that, after the Emergency Regulations came into force immediately following the insurrection, conferring wide powers on the government and the police, few of the laborers dared to strike.)

The question of timing

There are many puzzling features about the risings in Indonesia and Malaya. Both give every indication of having gone off prematurely, before

the Communists were really ready. Why did the Communists kill only three planters in Malaya on June 14 when, if there had been a properly-coordinated rising, they could quite easily have killed 300? The murder of three, while bringing no commensurate advantages to them, sufficed to bring about an immediate and maximum reaction from the British side. It might be observed that the date June 14, now generally used to mark the opening of the insurrection, is only a D-Day in retrospect and from the British point of view. Throughout May and June there was a steady crescendo of strikes and violent incidents up-country in which a number of Chinese enemies of the Communists were murdered. It was the murder of the three British planters that caused the British governments at home and in Malaya to take the affair seriously.

Again, why was it three months before the insurgents made any attempt, and that a half-hearted one, to interfere with Malaya's important north-south railway? Why is it that they have only recently turned their attention to communications, an obvious target for a guerrilla movement such as theirs? Has it been sheer inefficiency? Politically they have always showed themselves to be capable of considerable organization. During the war the Malayan Peoples' Anti-British Army (the armed organization which the British are fighting) had, when it called itself the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army, the benefit of guidance and instruction from trained British guerrilla leaders.

The analysis of the above events which makes most sense to this writer is the following: Even at the end of 1947 the Malayan communist leaders were considering a much more extreme "line" in view of their failure to obtain sufficient control of Malaya's labor to achieve political power by that means. The government was beginning to implement some measures, and was contemplating the introduction of others, curtailing the scope for political activity in the labor field. Changes in personnel inside the MCP had already occurred, and some of the new young leaders were temperamentally more inclined to direct action through having spent their most formative years living by the gun as members of the anti-Japanese resistance. From the Calcutta conferences the Malayan leaders learned that direct action was in accord with what some of the other communist parties of South East Asia, or at any rate powerful sections of them, had in mind, and that it was in accord with the desires of the Soviet Union, as part of the latter's campaign to sabotage the Marshall Plan and to strike at "the soft under-belly of the capitalist world." Some sort of time schedule for the risings was worked out at Calcutta. There is considerable evidence that the big climactic moment in Malaya, whether for an armed revolt or for a general strike, was to be August. In April the communist leaders decided to step up the tempo of their industrial activity and in May, largely as a result of the setbacks which they received in Singapore, they gave orders for the preliminary mobilization of the Malayan Peoples' Anti-British Army (MPABA). The murder of the three British planters was not intended by the high command and was almost an

accident, possibly the result of one of the state regiments misinterpreting or interpreting too zealously a directive ordering increased activity. It brought about, as described above, an immediate reaction from the government, and the communist leaders had to make up their minds in a hurry whether to go underground quietly or to fight. They chose to fight.

One gets the irresistible impression in Malaya that the Communists were forced into direct action before they were ready—almost that they *drifted* into revolution.

The question of Russia's role

Beyond certain coincidences and a common pattern of action which manifested itself throughout South East Asia, suggesting a coordinating agency, there has been no concrete evidence of direct Russian instigation or complicity. What has happened has, of course, been in the Russian interest, but it is difficult to imagine that the Kremlin could have "ordered" direct action unless it had seemed to the local communist leaders to be the right tactic.

The Indonesian rising also went off half-cocked. Why? According to foreign observers in Jogjakarta, the Indonesian rising was timed to begin three months after the Malayan rising, which would have meant November if indeed August was originally intended to be the big month in Malaya. There is believed to have been a considerable difference of opinion between Sjarifoeddin and Alimin on the one hand and Moeso and Soeripno on the other, not on the principle of direct action but on the timing, the two latter wanting to adhere to the three-month interval even after Malaya had begun prematurely. Another possible explanation is that after Mohammad Hatta, the Premier, had cleverly released from prison the old Trotskyite Tan Malaka, the latter made such rapid headway amongst the left-wing groups that the other leaders felt they had to strike before he had whittled away too much of their support. It is interesting to speculate whether the revolution might have fared differently if the Indonesian communist leaders had waited until the month of November, when the news of the big communist victories in China was beginning to have a noticeable effect throughout the countries of South East Asia.

Communist miscalculations

The Malayan communist leaders made certain grave miscalculations. First, they miscalculated to some degree the willingness of the rank and file of the MPABA, many of them living in comfortable civilian billets, to return to the dangers and hardships of jungle warfare that they had endured during the war years. Many of them had to be forced at the point of a gun to obey the mobilization call.

Second, in the opinion of some detached observers, they miscalculated

their hold on labor and expected the insurrection to be followed by mass risings on the part of the labor forces in Malaya which would effectively disrupt the economic life of the country. They failed to realize that what hold they did have on labor was based very largely on intimidation and that, despite all the postwar discontents and difficulties, there is far less popular anti-British feeling amongst the masses than there was anti-Japanese feeling during the war. No popular risings occurred and—instead of there being any disruption of the country's economy—production in the rubber and tin industries, owing to the cessation of strikes, will almost certainly be greater in 1948 than it was in 1947. It has been universally accepted by British statesmen and officials that the primary aim of the insurrection was to disrupt the economy of Malaya, and they have regarded it as a bright spot in an otherwise dark picture that this has not in fact occurred. That is certainly the "aim" which makes most sense to a western mind. But it is possible that when the Malayan Communists found themselves at war, so to speak, before they were ready, they accepted the fact that they could do little in the labor field under the Emergency Regulations for the time being and so made their primary aim the task of trying to discredit the government in the eyes of the people without causing the latter too much economic hardship.

Third, they were frustrated by vigorous military action in what seems to have been their early plan of seizing the Gua Musang area in Kelantan State and proclaiming it a "Liberated Area." Fourth, even if the Communists had foreseen that in such a rising they would temporarily have had to abandon leadership of the country's labor, they can hardly have foreseen the disastrous political consequences which the rising has had, especially in widening the rift between the Chinese and the Malays, perhaps, as some people think, to the point of permanent irreconcilability. An interesting feature of MCP politics during the months preceding the insurrection was a noticeable cooling-off between the Malay and Indian Communists on the one hand and the Chinese Communists on the other. It was significant that, when the insurrection began, the Indian member of the central executive committee, Balan, and the two most prominent left-wing Indian labor leaders, Kurup and Krishnamurthi, allowed themselves to be picked up by the police when they could quite easily have escaped.

The lack of spontaneous voluntary support which the Communists have received from the peoples of Malaya, as distinct from the very considerable help which they are continuing to extract from the people by force and threats, confirms the statement made by Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General in South East Asia, during a recent visit to England, that the rising cannot be regarded as an expression of genuine Malayan nationalism similar to the nationalist movements which are agitating other parts of the Far East. It is of course tinged with nationalistic motives and, in its wider context, it is part of the protest which all of the Asian peoples have made against the old relationship between East and West. But in essence it

remains the attempt of a small minority, overwhelmingly Chinese and predominantly immigrant in composition, to seize power by force and impose a totalitarian system on the country.

Notes

- 1 See Virginia Thompson, "Burma's Communists," *Far Eastern Survey*, May 5, 1948, pp. 103-105.
- 2 See "The Communist Revolt in Java," *Far Eastern Survey*, November 17, 1948, pp. 257-64.
- 3 When the new constitution came into effect on February 1, 1948, the Malayan Union became the Malayan Federation, with a High Commissioner instead of a Governor. It was still constitutionally distinct from the Colony of Singapore. The use of the word Federation in this connection must not be confused with the federations of trade unions created by the MCP.
- 4 S. S. Awbery, M. P., and F. W. Dalley, *Labour and Trade Union Organisation in the Federation of Malaya and Singapore*, Kuala Lumpur, 1948.

FORCES FOR UNITY IN MALAYA: OBSERVATIONS OF A EUROPEAN RESIDENT

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Source: *International Affairs* 25 (1949): 453-65.

Little can be done towards promoting unity in Malaya until the British (people of English, Scottish, and Northern Irish origin) who live and work there are clear about their own position in the country.

The United Kingdom has taken the stand, in the public councils of the world, that whatever the unit of government, it is better for people to govern themselves. This commitment affects certain relations of British individuals to those territories in which the United Kingdom still exercises authority. The obligations laid on British individuals are most difficult to fulfil in countries where European settlement is possible. Malaya is not such a country, for it is generally agreed to be unsuitable for European settlement except in a political situation in which Europeans can serve in administrative and professional positions.

Thus the British are in a fundamentally different position from the Chinese and Indians, because of the temporary status of Malaya as a dependent country in which we have no permanent future. With the exception of the merchants of Penang and Singapore, whose role may remain that of providing permanent trade links with the West, few of the British in Malaya can be honestly fulfilling the role to which their country's policy has committed them unless they are consciously working to be succeeded in the near or distant future by a Malay, a Chinese, an Indian, or a Eurasian. For a Chinese or an Indian the position is entirely different. There is the possibility of permanent settlement; and for their children the prospects, whatever their attainments, are (materially at least) better than in China or India. The role which the British have to play, therefore, in the achievement of national unity in Malaya, is not that of setting an example in 'Malayanization'. What will

tell in the long run are those of our actions which are consistently directed towards the United Kingdom's stated aims. And our service can only be genuine if it is, and is avowed to be, service given by outsiders. There is no place for ambiguity on this point.

The role of the British as a body outside the main body of Malaya, exercising a temporary influence on it but working for a situation in which this will no longer be necessary, is essentially a new role. Before the war it would have been maintained that, while the progress of education, and commercial and industrial development, would undoubtedly cause political change, it was nevertheless no part of our policy to stimulate and encourage this change deliberately. The European was then expected to be more or less permanent, and he had a separate life and a public opinion of his own. Since the war a curious idea has developed that the democratic thing to do is to play down the differences between Europeans and the people of Malaya. But if self-government is the aim, we must plan for the ultimate departure of the Europeans, and this means that they must be a detachable part of the community.

A European public opinion in Malaya genuinely concerned with the problem of self-government would have many questions to discuss. The local corruption, which has been accentuated so much since the Japanese occupation, would be regarded as an urgent problem and not merely an excuse for delay in promoting self-government. The tendency, in joint undertakings, for each race to prefer to work under a European rather than under a superior of different local race would be quoted, not as evidence that self-government is really all nonsense, but as a problem that needs serious investigation. Racial favouritism should not be taken for granted, but treated as something to be overcome.

It is not suggested here that a majority of the British population in Malaya treats self-government as something that should not be taken seriously. The trouble is rather that discussion within the European community itself of what its function is, how rapidly power should be handed over, what the problems are, and so on, is handicapped by the fact that most people feel the policy is no concern of theirs. A substantial number of Europeans were isolated in Japanese gaols and out of touch with world affairs for nearly four years. They returned to a world in which different things were said and different policies adopted. Moreover the policies were obviously ill-thought-out, and appeared to promise immediate implementation of plans that, with the best will in the world, would take a long time to mature. Among the Chinese it is important to express the right sentiment; and the expression almost suffices, provided that no obviously inconsistent action is taken. It came to be the right sentiment among Europeans to say that self-government was bound to come; but the appropriate public opinion in active support of this policy has not yet developed.

In this paper it is assumed that the primary objective of British policy in Malaya is our own departure from that territory at the earliest date

consistent with enabling her to control her own destiny and not fall rapidly under the control of some other Power. We have of course secondary objectives also. Most of us would like any government which succeeds us in Malaya to be technically competent, reasonably free from corruption, and democratic in intention; the achievement of a minimum standard in these matters might even come within the primary objective, since self-government implies government, and beyond a certain point bad government ceases to be government at all. Again, most of us would prefer change to take place without avoidable bloodshed, and the subsequent government in Malaya to favour social justice, uphold the rule of law, trade with the rest of the world, and remain associated with the British Commonwealth.

One powerful argument in favour of the appointment of a Royal Commission on Malaya is that it would stimulate honest thought among Europeans there about the new situation. We are representatives of the United Kingdom overseas under notice of recall, with limited opportunities of solving our problems. This is the basic fact of our situation and it requires thinking through in all its implications.

Are political forces in Malaya naturally evolving towards a situation in which she will be able to govern herself? There can surely be no doubt about the answer. The natural evolution of political forces in Malaya is working towards something very different, namely a situation in which, without large and increasing concentration of British forces in Malaya, it will be impossible to prevent her from becoming a focus of rivalry and war in Asia for generations to come. There can be nothing natural about the emergence of one nationality out of the tangle of different races that inhabit Malaya. But the British are responsible, the British public that helps (or should help) to form British policy and British public opinion in Malaya. The United Kingdom is reaping and has reaped considerable advantage from the trade of Malaya. It is British policy that has created the situation now developing, with all its potentialities. To create one nation out of the forces now at work will be a task of heart-breaking difficulty. If there is any way in which we can attempt some easier task, consistent with our main objective, we must try to discover it. What are the alternatives?

We may consider first the possibility of gradually working towards the elimination of the racial problem by reducing two of the three races to negligible minorities. No-one could seriously consider so radical a policy if the alternatives were not desperately difficult. Nevertheless, we must consider it honestly. If we cannot create a harmony of the races, we can foster self-government only by giving one of them power to rule. What steps would be necessary to achieve such a result?

The first possibility is that of reducing to negligible proportions both the Chinese and the Indians. There is little doubt that there is an extremist section of Malay opinion which would welcome such a policy, though probably

few educated Malays consider it possible even as a long-run objective. Nevertheless, Malay opinion is encouraged to demand this kind of policy by certain British utterances to the effect that Malaya is a Malay country.

So long as Malaya remains politically unsophisticated and is firmly controlled by British administrators backed by British troops, it is possible to call it a Malay country and assume that Chinese and Indians are aliens without implying any intention to take drastic action against them. But anyone with even a rudimentary sense of political possibilities must realize that a self-governing Malay Malaya is an impossibility unless most drastic action is taken against the other two races over a considerable period of years.

What would be the most hopeful way to proceed if we wished to establish a Malay Malaya within a period of, say, thirty years? It would clearly be impossible to prevent Chinese and Indians from occupying important posts, even within this period, but it is just possible that really drastic action would enable the Malays to exercise effective control. It would be necessary to break the Chinese monopoly of the distributive trade, to give the Malays an effective monopoly in all the large-scale mining concerns, to raise the relative position of the Malay small-holder to exclude, to the maximum extent possible, all new Chinese and Indian entrants from the learned professions. No informed person would deny that all these would be necessary, and that they would need to be accompanied by continued pressure on the Chinese to emigrate and by prevention of immigration.

No sane person would advocate any such policy. It is doubtful whether anyone has ever seriously advocated it. It would be impossible to drive out many Chinese quickly without completely ruining the country. The Malay extremists who want to send the Chinese back to China and the Indians back to India have not thought out any concrete programme; and as for the Englishmen who encourage them by speaking of Malaya as their country, it would be rash to accuse them of anything so constructive as a positive anti-Chinese policy.

We must make no mistake about this. If we mean self-government under Malay control this is the bare minimum of discrimination that would be necessary. Any such discrimination would, of course, put an end to the possibility of eradicating Communist terrorism, for it would, within a fairly short time, make every Chinese in Malaya a potential supporter of the terrorists. It would transform the relations of individual Europeans and Chinese. It would produce thousands of bitter and well-justified grievances every year, in which Europeans on racial grounds alone would be forced to prefer Malays with markedly inferior qualifications to well-qualified Chinese.

Suppose we were to set our feet on this course, what would be the end of our endeavours beyond decades of bloodshed and bitterness? Only a Malaya with a population perhaps three-quarters Malay, poorer than it is now, and with two strong minorities each violently and bitterly nationalist, perpetually carrying their grievances across the Bay of Bengal and the

China Sea, to the two great nations beyond. There is no solution in this policy.

The opposite racial policy is that of allowing immigration, and the opening up of new areas and enterprises by Chinese on such a scale that the Malays and Indians would be completely swamped. This, though it is also a policy that could not now be pursued without bloodshed, is by no means as difficult a policy as the pro-Malay one. Indeed one might almost say that this is the natural policy, the normal result of merely swimming with the tide. The Malays can see far enough to see this, and that is the main reason why, while they have the chance, they will undoubtedly fight rather than allow it to happen.

Is there a reasonable chance that a racially Chinese Malaya would remain politically independent, or would it be driven by force of circumstances to become an overseas part of the Chinese State? In answering this question one fact is decisive. A Chinese Malaya could be effected only as a result of violent and prolonged inter-racial strife. The Chinese would inevitably feel acutely conscious of their kinship with new Chinese immigrants, and minimize their differences from those immigrants, since their success would depend on free and large-scale immigration; their leadership of the immigrants would depend on accepting them as they were with all their attachments to the Chinese homeland.

There can therefore be little doubt that a Chinese Malaya would be Chinese politically as well as racially, at least for a decade or so after the inter-racial battle had been won. Thereafter, if China were a democratic country, we might anticipate a strong and increasing separatist movement in Malaya based on its different economic interests, higher standards of education and technology, and distinct territory and mode of life. But this would be possible only after both the Malays and Indians had been wholly submerged and reduced to political impotence; and even if we felt that this was inevitable, and that we had no right or power to check its occurrence, it would at least not come about quickly.

Would such a policy be consistent with our primary object of self-government? Those who believe that China is being absorbed as a colony by Russian imperialism would of course give a negative answer. But most people would answer in the same way even if we could assume an independent and democratic China. We should be handing over, not to the people of the country, but to a foreign Power that would seem at least as foreign as we do, not merely to the Malays and Indians but even to many of the local Chinese themselves. To most Malayan Chinese the cleavage between them and the considerable numbers of new immigrants with different ways of life is at least as great as any between them and the British. These tensions are at present submerged in inter-racial feeling, fostered by the idea that the British favour the Malays and treat all Chinese equally as aliens. But they are still very real for tens if not hundreds of thousands of

Chinese who understand very well the differences in opportunity between Malaya and China.

Though a policy of drifting with the tide is a pro-Chinese policy, it does not merely mean that a policy of complete *laissez-faire* would benefit the Chinese. Any policy of leaving nationality and citizenship to be settled by the rival pressures of the races is a pro-Chinese policy. So long as the Chinese act together, the Malays are not strong enough in the long run even to control immigration. Once allow racial issues to become a naked contest between Malay and Chinese and, unless we keep British troops in Malaya in large numbers, the Chinese will ultimately win. The Chinese have the numbers and the economic power, and also superiority in education. If they are merely opposed by the political power of the Malays they will certainly defeat it by sabotage, erosion, and the backing of the Government of China.

For this reason we may call the old Malayan Union policy a mildly pro-Chinese policy. The present policy is, on the other hand, mildly pro-Malay. Both policies, and in particular the transition from one to the other, are calculated to exacerbate racial feeling without really solving the racial problem. But even the more extreme racial policies discussed above can offer no real solution on either side.

The only way, in the long run, to protect the Malays effectively is to mobilize a substantial section of local non-Malay opinion on their side; to bring home to the permanent residents of Malaya the points that they have in common, the points that differentiate them from immigrant aliens. This is not an easy approach, but it is the only approach that has even a chance of success. It demands a really active policy: a policy that allows political objectives profoundly to influence the technical activities of government.

Let us consider, therefore, some suggestions for implementing this policy by official action enforced by local British public opinion. Official action can work partly by patronage, partly by encouragement of activities, and partly by influencing legislation and executive action.

The most obvious requirement in a policy designed to build a Malayan nation is the conscious selection for public positions of those who will work for it. This is something that will not come about naturally. The most obvious people to select are those who represent existing separate groups. Such people, although they may be politically unconstructive, are unlikely to be embarrassingly opposed to Government and will more easily carry weight with their own sections of the population. But it is vitally important to select Chinese who are keenly aware of the dangers of pressure from immigrants with alien sympathies, and Malays who value and will use the alliance of such Chinese if they can win it.

How many such Chinese are there? It must be admitted at once that selection would not be easy; probably this is a major reason for the appointment of men with Chinese nationalist sympathies and contacts to responsible

positions, such as membership of the Federal Council. It is far too easy for either the Kuomintang or the Communists to represent any Chinese who opposes their influence as merely a running-dog of the British, to set terrorists to attack him, and in general either to deter him from political activity altogether or to make him feel dependent on British good will. Yet the people whose political influence we need to encourage are those who are likely to oppose British influence in Malaya's affairs for the same reasons as make them oppose Chinese or Indian influence, namely loyalty to Malaya and political ambition within a Malayan setting.

It is necessary to set about the task with imagination. Some of the appointments made by Sir Edward Gent on the advice of his Trade Union Adviser, for example, showed considerable imagination, with the result that Malaya now has a small but by no means powerless independent trade union movement. Similar selection, for recognition and responsibility in other fields, of relatively obscure people with a genuine Malayan patriotism anti-Chinese and anti-British alike, would have had similar effects in encouraging movements that would ultimately make stable self-government possible.

Seeds of genuine Malayan patriotism were sown by the activities of the All Malaya Council of Joint Action, although, as is common in such movements in politically backward areas, the small and well-organized Communist element appears to have largely dominated the Council's policy for ends that were in no sense Malayan. Probably very few of the members of the bodies that made up the Council were aware of any Communist direction, though experience of left-wing parties and trade unions all over the world pointed conclusively, in the conditions prevailing in Malaya, to an organized attempt by the Communists to dominate such bodies. But it would be a mistake to assume that all those who indignantly deny any Communist influence are insincere in their views or in their support of the AMCJA policies so far as they went. Many of the policies advocated were reasonable, though their timing was calculated to ensure that they would not succeed. And most of the supporters of these policies were almost certainly sincere Malayan patriots.

It is a very dangerous fallacy to assume that, in nominating unofficial Members of Councils, a Governor's function is simply to give representation to prevailing opinions in the country. Some members are nominated rather than elected because (and only because) prevailing opinions are not sufficiently united, constructive, and informed, to make any stable elected Government possible. If we are in earnest about our professed aims we must use official patronage to remedy this state of affairs by stimulating those kinds of opinion which will make genuine and non-communal elections possible.

Next we may consider what activities of ordinary citizens should be encouraged by the Government, and how it should encourage them. First it must be said, as emphatically as possible, that it is most important to

encourage political activity. If a community discourages political activity, then those who are amenable to reason and moral persuasion keep out and leave a clear field for the thugs and the gangsters.

Before the war one was told with considerable emphasis, on arriving in Malaya, that there were no politics there and that politics were not wanted. From a political point of view twenty years of unrivalled opportunity were thrown away, with no justification except that it saved trouble in a climate where trouble was exacting. Twenty years of relative prosperity were wasted in which a constructive political tradition could have been developed and men of intelligence and integrity associated with the fight against the social evils of racial rivalry, corruption, squalor, and malnutrition. Malaya is now left to face the bitterness of national impoverishment, to heal the wounds of inter-racial bloodshed, to get through the inevitable growing pains of trade union organization and representative government, to scratch together the beginnings of social services and repair the ravages of war, in bitter and desperate haste. Hampered by guerrillas in its own midst, surrounded by seething nationalism, and menaced by Communist imperialism, Malaya has no leisure to undo the neglect of these years. But the long discouragement of politics has left no more than a handful of men, of the eminence and honesty needed for leadership, who understand the real tensions of a modern State. Without reasonable acquaintance with politics, the people of Malaya will be unable to create a united country and to resist external pressure. And the consequences of failure in Malaya would not be negligible.

In the nature of things it is not easy for an external government to encourage politics. But a good deal can be done to break the bad tradition that any interest in politics is rather dangerous. For one thing, a great many professional people are technically Government servants. General orders can be and often are applied to discourage them from taking any part in public criticism of Government or in the organization of any political activity. Some limit should be set to what Government servants may legitimately do in organizing political action, but it is at least doubtful policy to allow these orders to apply to technicians at all. Certain fields of political activity should be positively encouraged by giving preference in promotion to those who were active in these fields, whether their political opinions were pro-British or anti-British.

The term 'politics', however, is a vague one. We may take certain specific aspects, beginning with relations between different races. These can be dealt with constructively in two different ways. There is the approach based on getting together and promoting good will, and the approach based on co-operative analysis of sources of friction. Both of these are necessary. Good will meetings between members of different races are undeniably popular in Malaya at present. They are certainly useful in oiling the social machinery and forming habits within which co-operation may become possible. But it is important to remember two things in this general promotion of good will.

First, oil merely keeps things going; it becomes positively harmful if it encourages people to forget the underlying conflicts altogether. Second, in promoting good will, the relation between the temporary and external British and the people of the country should not be forgotten. Good will and fellow-feeling among the people of the country are one thing; good will between them and temporary immigrants, whether alien Chinese or colonial British, is another. Both types need promoting: there is no place for a colour bar in ordinary social relations. But the two types need to be distinguished. It is positively harmful to suggest that we are all Malaysians together.

The best inter-racial meetings are, of course, those with some other end in view: for example most of the various cultural activities which at present grow out of English education, from amateur dramatics to philately, are inter-racial in character. The organization of economic life on an inter-racial basis is even more important, and in this respect European business, which has been compelled by economic factors to employ non-Europeans without much distinction of race, has been a constructive factor. The two greatest difficulties here are higher control and language. Chinese do not much mind having Indians senior to them or Indians Chinese, but there is little doubt that where direct control is concerned all races would at present prefer to work under Europeans rather than under other races than their own. The language difficulty is not very serious down to the artisan level, since instructions and simple negotiations in English are possible. Labourers, however, tend to be grouped on a racial basis even in European concerns or in Government. In this connexion it is worth mentioning the considerable substitution since the war of direct labour for the contract system, for example, by the Singapore Harbour Board. This change is bound to work in the direction of greater inter-racial contact and can be used to promote inter-racial harmony.

The other kind of constructive action in improving relations between races is one that needs even more Government encouragement, though such encouragement can only be given from the outside. Study by a group, say, of Chinese and Malays, of the chief causes of inter-racial friction and the best ways of lessening it, should be given most active encouragement. It is important, however, that such activities should not degenerate, through ill-advised Government interference, into mere occasions for fostering good will on a pan-Malayan basis.

A vital force for unity in Malaya at present is the official policy of encouraging trade unions. Genuine trade unions, however, are a very different thing from the extortion-gangs organized by the Communists under the pan-Malayan Federation, mainly in the interval of comparative anarchy after the end of Japanese rule. These, though they stirred up several strikes by wholesale intimidation, and extorted regular 'subscriptions', were little but a legacy of guerrilla rule, expanding into the power-vacuum created

when the Japanese left the country. Unfortunately some of the more reactionary commercial interests have furthered Communist plans by identifying these bodies with trade unionism in Malaya and attributing the crisis to Government encouragement of trade unions.

The Malayan Government's attitude to trade unions and its attitude to Communism must be distinguished. A good deal of the confusion about Malaya arises from the fact that Europeans there who have, throughout most of their lives, disregarded politics, find it hard to distinguish between these two different threats to their economic interests; and naturally the Communists are happy to perpetuate this confusion. Since the war the official attitude to trade unions has been largely based on considerations relating to Malaya itself, but the official attitude to Communism (since the war) has been influenced by the world situation.

The need for a strong trade union movement in Malaya is based on political considerations: chiefly on the grounds that self-government cannot be stable unless local leaders can command wide popular support; that if the working classes are unorganized the local middle class will tend to be reactionary and oppose social reform; and that rivalry between different political parties will foster social reform as the processes of democracy develop. Without trade unions Government has no adequate guidance to the interests of the inarticulate populace which are, in fact, constantly misrepresented by the articulate, educated middle class, whose opposition to Whitehall is not simply opposition to outside interference but also to social reform. The Communist element in the trade unions, however, was something very different from this and much more sinister, but it cannot be discussed without considering the official attitude to Communism.

Most of the planters and miners and pre-war civil servants would have liked the Government to treat Communism in 1945 in the way it had been treated ten years earlier. The Government's failure to do so was regarded (probably rightly) as a result of 'control from Whitehall'. But only those wholly ignorant of world politics could suppose that the British Government should not have exercised this control. To have allowed suppression of the Communist Party by pre-war methods at that time would have alienated both American and Russian opinion, and probably prejudiced a successful solution in India and in Ceylon. There can be no question that it was right to take into account the universal desire that certainly existed in 1945 for a new relation both with Russia and with popular movements in Asia.

Though the Government did not suppress the Communist Party, it was well aware that Communists and even ordinary gangsters were practising extortion, and organizing and dominating a majority of the trade unions by intimidation. It was greatly handicapped in dealing with this situation, by being unwilling to suppress the Communist Party, and by having to deal piecemeal with its many illegal acts. It is arguable that, weighing the situation in Malaya against that in the world as a whole, the suppression of the

Communist Party and the banning of the pan-Malayan Federation, should have been done before the murders and terrorism began—say six months earlier. But one of the chief arguments against this is that it would probably have prevented the consolidation of the non-Communist unions. That would have been a major defeat.

Another activity that needs strong Government support is adult education. The Government of Singapore has agreed to give assistance to the People's Education Association, an independent body with a membership drawn mainly from English schools and the colleges of the University. A grant to this Association has been made by the British Council. The Association's activities are at present confined to the arrangement of lectures in English for any who wish to attend. A good deal of technical education of adults is undertaken by the Government directly, but, though this may have more economic significance, it is not what is here meant by adult education, which can be encouraged only through genuinely independent bodies.

In the field of legislation, it would probably be unwise at present to introduce any very drastic constitutional changes. The conditions for acquiring citizenship should probably remain much as at present, giving automatic citizenship to relatively few even of the Chinese born in the country. It is probably better that most should acquire citizenship by application, though facilities to pass the language tests should be provided more freely. It is probably wise, too, that at least for a time Chinese should not be compelled to become British subjects or subjects of Sultans in order to become citizens.

A possible step in the near future would be the negotiation of a treaty between His Majesty the King and the Sultans, by which any citizen of the Federation with suitable qualifications could become a subject of His Majesty, or of any Sultan, or of both, those who qualified only as British subjects being deemed to be domiciled in one of the Settlements, and conversely for those who were subjects of one of the Sultans. It would not be necessary to make every citizen a subject, but the status in one or other category should at least be attainable to anyone desiring it sufficiently to work for it.

This would make it possible to base Federal elections, and similar broad public affairs, on Federal citizenship; to confine certain State and Settlement posts to subjects (or resident subjects) of the State or Settlement; and to confine certain Federal posts to those who qualified as subjects both of His Majesty and of one of the Sultans. Qualifications might be based on birth in Malaya, language, and some form of option and declaration of allegiance in constitutional form.

It would also be worth considering the establishment of some sort of Aliens Council in Singapore, or the Federation, or both, with power to make representations on behalf of resident aliens. This would presumably diminish in importance with the passage of time. But it is important to emphasize the separateness of those whose stay in Malaya is merely transient by a method

which will avoid giving them an impression of harsh treatment. Such a Council, of course, could not be elective.

In the realm of executive action three things need emphasis: English education; apprenticeship plans; and means of distinction between citizens and aliens.

English education is vital to Malaya. Whether or not the people of the country ultimately favour a Malay language education, as things are a Malay language education could not *per se* unify the people; English education is the only instrument that could. But to succeed it must be a widespread education, an education in English of virtually the whole population and not only the middle class.

This may seem a heretical idea, uncongenial to educationists and nationalist politicians. Nevertheless, there is really no other solution. First, we must face the fact that language is, and must remain, a political issue in Malaya, and that if we are in earnest about our political aims the political issue must transcend purely educational considerations. It is, in a sense, natural for an immigrant to be educated in the language of his country of origin, and this probably produces the best results in terms of self-expression and individual achievement. But if we mean what we say about self-government we must do what we can to fit the individual for citizenship in a united community. Since one of the chief factors opposing national unity is education in the vernacular languages, it is most undesirable that the Government should encourage it. Aid should be given to Chinese or Indians who wish to remain aliens to study wholly in their own vernacular. Moreover the University should provide opportunities for studying Indian and Chinese cultures. But English education should at least be provided free for all who express a preference for it; and it might even be better to offer it as the normal form of education, with other options as exceptional. It is not generally realized that virtually all the Chinese and Indians and at least a very substantial minority of the Malays would choose English education in preference to any other if they could get it free.

But why should we use English in preference to Malay? The answer to this is that if all those settled in Malaya would be willing to study in Malay, the political arguments in favour of it would go far towards offsetting the technical and commercial advantages of English; for it would give the people of Malaya something in common that differentiated them from their rulers, and it would give an advantage to the settled inhabitants in comparison with the immigrants. In practice, however, because of the great technical advantages of English, it is quite impossible to make a Malay system work. It would drive the non-Malays into separate schools, as it has done in the past, and so fail to help in solving the racial problem. Within an English system, however, it is desirable to make Malay a compulsory subject, preferably taught by the direct method. The two essentials seem to be that the educational system

should attract students of all races and that it should provide a unified and efficient education giving some advantage to those with most claim to belong to the country.

Apprenticeship is still rather the exception in Malaya. Skilled labour has in the past been either imported (mainly from China), trained on the job, or given a rather expensive local training in trade schools. The Wages Commission, 1947, of which the author of this article was Chairman, had occasion to look into the experience of apprenticeship systems, and to recommend an extension of apprenticeship and the linking of it with education, so far as possible in English schools. It would be possible for the Government, through its influence on the Harbour Boards, Railways, and Municipalities, and through the Public Works Department, to build up a body of skilled craftsmen with an industrial tradition of a more or less western type, that would be able to give effective leadership to organized labour in Malaya. Apprenticeship on an inter-racial basis would do for the lower middle class what professional training is doing for the professional class in providing a unified Malayan tradition.

Finally there is the possibility of drawing special distinction between citizens and aliens. At present if one makes a report at a police station, applies to enter a school, attends a hospital, or applies for a licence of any kind, one invariably has to state one's race on some form, or to some official; questions about citizenship are not asked. The Government might with advantage go a little out of its way to emphasize the distinction between citizens and aliens, and with only minor inconvenience avoid any reference to race.

In national registration or registration of births the emphasis should also be on citizenship. Any Chinese shopkeeper can say easily enough that he is Chinese and a Hokkien, but may find it difficult to say whether he is a citizen of Malaya. Emphasis on the latter may seem unrealistic and lacking in imagination; but in the long run the unimaginative thing is to treat the Hokkien shopkeeper simply as a Hokkien. Special aliens' cards should be used in hospitals, special aliens' forms in assessment for income tax, and so on. Special discriminatory treatment or discriminatory rates are neither necessary nor desirable.

Many of the Malays wish to apply tests for citizenship which will be exclusive in character. The most glaring example is the demand for literacy in Malay language tests which excludes non-Malays who are illiterate from becoming citizens by application. But what is required is the kind of test that will emphasize differences between citizens and aliens. And far more important than the tests themselves is the desire to absorb all those entitled to Malayan citizenship and the development of an active policy, in administration and education, wherever this is genuinely possible, which will foster the creation of a single united community in Malaya.

POLICY FOR MALAYA, 1952

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Source: *International Affairs* 28 (1952): 445-51.

Malaya is in a special position at the present time for three reasons: she represents a hot front in the cold war; she has a critical role in the sterling area's relations with the dollar area, and perhaps an even more important and more neglected role in the internal structure of the sterling area; and she is an important strategic centre in Asia both for the Commonwealth and for the peace of the world as a whole.

First the hot front: it is important, especially in view of current attitudes to the Emergency, not to exaggerate the heat. Taking Malaya as a whole the danger to a civilian of being killed by a terrorist is hardly significantly greater than the danger of being killed in a road accident. Without details of the numbers subject to risk it is not possible to give an accurate picture of the danger to troops and police, but it is certainly low by any war-time standard, and probably comparable to the hazards of training with live ammunition. 'Jungle-bashing' is arduous and unrewarding, and certainly merits being called active service; but I am doubtful whether it is truthful, and even more doubtful whether it is wise, to call it war, except in the sense in which the cold war is war.

The front is important partly because it is necessary to keep Malaya's industry going as normally as possible and partly because the terrorists would be a grave danger if a third world war broke out. It is a very costly affair at least by peace-time standards in Malaya—a few thousand Communists are able to impose on us expenses of tens of thousands of pounds a day, which would have sufficed to transform, for example, the whole educational system of the country. It ties up relatively large numbers of British troops in an area where, from the point of view of Commonwealth strategy, they probably should not be. For all these reasons it is important to end it if we can. But it is not a war like the war in Korea or even the war in Indo-China.

Malaya is important to the sterling area. She produces more than a third of the world's rubber and (with normal production) about a third of her tin,

and these are two of the materials that the United States buys in large quantities both for current use and for the stock-pile. Both the rubber and the tin industries are being attacked by the Communists. Indeed this is probably the basic reason for the resort to violence, in the sense that it was probably the reason for the instructions issued in 1948 that are believed by the authorities to have changed the tactics of the Malayan Communist Party. I am not implying that most of the comrades in Malaya realize this, as I doubt very much whether they would appreciate their role in the jungle if they realized how they were being sacrificed to Communist world economic strategy.

Fortunately the rubber industry has been little affected, though the long-run effects on prospecting in the tin industry may be even more serious than the short-run effects in slowing up recovery from the war. Rubber is much the more important, and for the maintenance of production in this industry we must pay tribute to the Malay smallholder, the European planter, and the tappers of all nationalities.

I have heard speakers on public occasions in the United Kingdom, with reporters present, assume all the credit on behalf of the European planters. We should be particularly careful not to let our natural sympathy for these men and their courageous families lead us into this untruthful discourtesy. Our standard of living owes much to the self-defence and resistance to Communist propaganda of the Malay smallholders; and to the courageous attitude of the rubber workers' unions in resisting intimidation and threats of torture from the Communists and simultaneously organizing, under conditions of great difficulty, to get decent standards for their members from their employers. It is no exaggeration to say that our standard of living in the United Kingdom is affected by these men. Without the dollars earned in the recent rubber boom the situation of the sterling area would be desperate. I do not know how it could have been met, but there might well have been a devaluation of sterling so great that the present rise in the cost of living would be imperceptible by comparison.

But Malaya does not only help the sterling area directly by contributing dollars. I think it would be true to say that without the dollar-earning colonies, of which Malaya is the chief, the sterling area itself would disintegrate, with disastrous effects on the whole of our trade. Some of the currencies of the independent countries in the sterling area are naturally stronger than others. They could benefit by restricting exchange relations with weaker currencies. Because the order of strengths is variable, and because our trade has grown up over a long period and our institutions are adapted to it, this has not caused the kind of break-up that happened in Europe in the nineteen-thirties. But it is easy to imagine this happening if the dollar-earning Colonies were not there to play the same kind of role that the United States has tried to play in building up the European Payments Union. Let us imagine a disintegration of the sterling area as a result of internal pressures. It might well prove necessary for the United States, in her own interest

though against her present inclinations, to build it up again. But what role could the United Kingdom expect to play then? It is difficult to see how we could survive.

Does this mean that we are exploiting Malaya against the will of her people for our own advantage? I do not think so, if we take political factors into account. The prosperity of the country depends on her trade with the non-Communist world. She clearly needs protection at present! She may well wish, for political reasons, to remain in the Commonwealth in the future. But I expect Malaya to drive a rather harder bargain when her politicians come to have a clearer idea of the position, and when they are rather less dependent on support from outside. Assuming that we mean what we say about self-government, we must reckon on this and prepare for it. Malaya's friendship is well worth earning.

I personally believe Malaya has a good deal to gain by remaining associated with the Commonwealth, but only on condition that her own people come to recognize this freely and are convinced, by fair and generous treatment, that it is for them to choose, in their own interest, whether they will stay or not.

The Malay peninsula is in grave danger of becoming the Balkans of Asia, and in Malaya at least the people are coming to recognize this. They want to avoid foreign interference and foreign control. For Britain is by no means the only country that could wish to control Malaya. Control by India, China, or Indonesia would probably be uneasy, temporary, and marked by continual violence. And control by any one of these would appear foreign to all but a proportion of the Indians, Chinese, and Malays respectively. Only a unified national culture could prevent such control. And a national culture uniting all races is something that excites the idealism and aspiration of the young people in Malaya, and something they feel they need if they are to survive.

We in Britain can do little about creating this common culture. We can only provide favourable soil. For its own self-respect it must, in some degree, arise in opposition to us. But we must bear in mind that it will be a culture emphasizing the separateness of Malaya from surrounding countries; and in view of Malaya's pattern of races and trade, it is perhaps not too much to hope that it will contain the English language as a permanent ingredient. So long as we can ensure that neither the English language nor membership of the Commonwealth is imposed, or even believed to be imposed, there is good reason for us to hope for Malaya's friendship in the long run. Malaya can remain the richest country in Asia, and can acquire, with our active help, before she needs to choose, the best education, and other social services in Asia as well. No one can be sure that these things can be achieved. I think we can be sure that they are the right things to try to achieve, and that there is no defensible alternative to the attempt to build up a viable, independent Malaya. If we believe this, it should be a sufficient basis for our work.

I think it goes without saying that this involves effort to root out Communist terrorism, effort to expand education at all levels to the limit of the country's resources, and effort to train the people of Malaya both for administrative responsibility in the civil service and for political responsibility by extension of the member system and of local and national elections. The trouble arises, of course, when these things conflict as they do at almost every turn. Often there is little one can say without excessive local detail about the occasions when these things conflict. Examples of such conflict could easily be multiplied.

I think four things are essential to any successful policy in Malaya today, though these things are stated in very general terms and will by no means always suggest a solution of the type of problem I have just mentioned. We should cultivate an attitude of cool confidence and avoid war fever; we should emphasize the break between present and pre-war policy; we should attempt to organize interested groups that will themselves apply pressure in favour of what needs to be done; and we should see that we do not ask for anything that conflicts with Asian nationalists' ideas of self-respect, however irrational these may appear. Let me elaborate these.

First, I believe that an attitude of cool confidence is desirable, and that the coolness is at least as important as the confidence. I wish it could be someone subject to greater danger and carrying more responsibility than I who had to say this. I fully sympathize with the planters, living under constant risk, in their attitude to critics living comfortably in towns. All the same, the prestige of the terrorists has been greatly raised by all this attitude of warfare, calling them 'the enemy', and trying to gear the whole economy of the country to their overthrow. It is worth a lot to be able to show contempt for violence, and nowhere is this more true than in Asia. Violence is a degraded, undignified, obscene thing, and one of our chief weapons against Communism is that on the whole we do believe this and do treat violence not as a normal feature of civilized life but as a departure from it.

I have said it is worth a lot to be able to show contempt for violence. It has indeed cost Malaya a lot. It cost us the life of a great High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, whose life was deliberately risked many times for this policy, and finally sacrificed in circumstances of great personal bravery. He was, as he said, the King's representative, and he refused to shelter behind armour. Other lives besides his own were no doubt sacrificed for this policy, but it was no mere whim of personal pride. The Emergency did not come first; it was a blot on the normal life, the economic and educational and constitutional progress of the country.

I think it would be an accurate summary of his policy that reasonable precautions could be taken, provided they did not involve cowering or loss of mobility, or distraction from the main aim. I consider that he gave his life for this policy. I feel that we in Malaya did him no honour when we wheeled the next Secretary of State for the Colonies around Malaya, against his own

wishes, in a bullet-proof box. Well, now we have introduced the full panoply of conscription, and noised it abroad in every corner of the world that Malaya is at war. If this is facing facts I am glad to be old-fashioned enough to prefer Gurney's hypocrisy.

The second point that I regard as important is that we should emphasize the break in continuity between present policy in Malaya and pre-war policy. No one can seriously pretend that before the war the British in Malaya were working for self-government there. No one can seriously doubt that, which ever party is in power at home, self-government in Malaya will be the official policy from now on, as it has been since the war.

People in Malaya are well aware of the change in circumstances brought about by the changed status of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon, and the independence of Indonesia and Burma. They know that the Japanese Occupation marked a break in Asia, just as the rising power of the United States has modified the attitude of Europe to Asia as a whole. Yet the Governments in Malaya usually do their best to pretend that our policy remains a continuous whole, thereby gratuitously allying themselves with much that is hated and suspected in Asia, and that certainly is not our present policy.

Why do we not say to nationalists in Malaya: 'You disapprove of colonialism. So much the better. So do we. We are working to establish a State that can function independently, and many of the things we did before the war now stand in our way. No doubt there were reasons for this policy then, but it runs counter to a good deal of what we now believe'? I am quite sure this would have helped enormously, and that our failure to say this destroys a good deal of the good will gained for us elsewhere in Asia by our post-war policy.

I believe the reason for this political folly is a comparatively trivial one. Many Malayan civil servants were prisoners during the war and were almost wholly unaware of the change that came over British public opinion during that time. I appreciate the difficulties from first-hand experience, and can well understand how to those who were less professionally concerned than I to take an interest in European politics the post-war policy in Asia may have seemed a quite temporary consequence of the coming to power of an inexperienced Labour Government. If this had been the real explanation any avowal of a change in policy would have appeared as participation in British party politics, which civil servants naturally wished to avoid. Some of Sir Gerald Templer's recent vigorous pronouncements underline, as one who was clearly appointed personally by a Conservative Secretary of State is in a good position to do, the sharp break that has been made with pre-war policy and the need for thinking through Malaya's problems afresh. We could, however, welcome an even more forthright statement on this matter.

The third ingredient for policy is the building up of the political education and political strength of groups which will support what needs to be done. More effective and more progressive taxation, better social services, more education, a more co-operative and more diversified small-holder economy;

all these must be achieved and must be working effectively before full power is handed over, if the handing over is not to lead to chaos and a revolutionary situation with eventual control by another power. Clearly it is no use merely putting these things forward with official backing. They will run counter to powerful local interests which at present could prevent them achieving success in legislative councils and finance committees.

It is easier to stimulate particular demands for legislation or public expenditure than to organize full scale elections. Encouragement can be given to local education authorities, the adult education movement, graduate teachers and returned students to organize pressure, in the mass, and in detail, in favour of better education; encouragement can be given to trade unions and smallholder organizations to bring pressure to bear on legislators in favour of their own interests. Powerful bodies can be built up which will favour more public expenditure on objects that will be essential if self government is to be stable.

I believe colonial Governments generally distrust such pressure groups because they make the administrative problems more difficult, and because the groups already in a position to organize pressure are always on the spot to prevent their emergence. For this reason it is important that pressure from the United Kingdom should be maintained by the Colonial Office, and through the Colonial Office by British public opinion. There are always well organized commercial interests exerting pressure both in the Colonies and in London. Their point of view is a legitimate one, but it is fantastically over-emphasized in the life of most Colonies; and this is mainly because insufficient pressure is applied by any other interested opinion.

Informed pressure from the United Kingdom in favour of the building up of several different interests in Malaya is especially important now when the High Commissioner is trying to build up national unity on the basis of opposition to Communism. This in itself is good, though I have emphasized my belief that a war scare should be avoided. But it would be wholly disastrous if it led to a monolithic structure in which all political opinions, or even all anti-colonial opinions, were regarded as the enemy to be fought.

This brings me to my final point. In all the contest of ideas that lies ahead we must respect most scrupulously the sensitiveness of the Asian mind on the subject of colonial rule. I think the best way for an Englishman to appreciate it is to think of the very delicate strings attached to Marshall aid and how we felt them; to magnify, beyond all bearing, the feelings we experience when an American senator criticizes aid to Europe on account of the flight of the Comet to Johannesburg. An Asian must feel a good deal worse.

So perhaps, in addition to attacking colour bar clubs—no doubt a good beginning—we can go a little further. When a Malayan statesman voluntarily says he would wish Malaya to remain in the Commonwealth we can try to appreciate the courage of this gesture, and condemn the political insanity that draws attention to the fact that the word 'British' was not mentioned.

We can recognize explicitly that Britain's continued relation with Malaya lies in Malaya's favour, and that until we have worked our passage through the years of transition we have no right to be British *and* Malaysians, and are not conferring a favour, but asking one, when we speak of Malaya as our home.

We can realize that Malayan statesmen can in no circumstances give us guarantees as binding as the friendship they might risk by giving them. Our interest in continued association with Malaysians is immense—probably greater even than their real interest in continued association with us—certainly greater than they believe their interest to be. At present British troops are fighting to maintain that association by protecting Malaya from terrorism. But in the long run our association must depend on friendship alone. The keystone of all policy is humbly to seek this friendship.

BRITISH IMPERIAL POLICY AND DECOLONIZATION IN MALAYA, 1942-52*

A. J. Stockwell

Source: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 13(1) (1984): 68-87.

In parliamentary statements during the inter-war years successive Secretaries of State proclaimed Britain's mission to be that of leading her dependencies to self-government in the 'fullness of time'. It was, as Malcolm MacDonald put it in 1938, an 'evolutionary process' through which different colonies passed at different speeds. In the tropical empire, however, significant constitutional changes were scarcely perceptible. As for Malaya, its prosperity, strategic position and political quiescence convinced the British that they would remain in control for the indefinite future. Senior officials had no wish 'to sell the pass in the East' and were not persuaded by arguments in favour of 'graceful voluntary concession'.¹ Confident in their ability to rule well, they also felt that self-government for a society so obviously divided on ethnic lines would be a disservice to the Malayan peoples.²

The Second World War set Malayan policy upon a new course. In February 1942 Singapore surrendered to the Japanese. It was, said Churchill, 'the worst disaster' in Britain's history. In the depths of the war Britain lost a profitable colony, a supposedly impregnable naval base and thousands of fighting men who went into captivity. Defeat by an underrated Asian power was particularly hard to bear; the invulnerability of the white man was flawed. The whole of South East Asia lay at Japan's feet; India and Australia were also exposed to attack. Britain would need American help to win back lost territory.

During their exile from Malaya the British devised the Malayan Union which abandoned the old principles of the sovereignty of the Malay rulers, the autonomy of the Malay states and the special position of the Malay people. After their return in September 1945 the British acquired sovereignty

from the Sultans and used it to establish a unitary government for Malaya (less Singapore) and press ahead with the creation of a Malayan nation by offering citizenship to all (Chinese and Indians as well as Malays) who regarded Malaya as home. The Malayan Union was a response to the following circumstances: (i) the administrative problems of the peninsula which before the war had been divided into Straits Settlements, Federated and Unfederated Malay States; (ii) the prospect of economic rehabilitation after the war when Britain would depend more than ever before upon the dollar-earning tin mines and rubber estates of Malaya; (iii) the need to assure the world, or at least the USA, of British progressivism by laying the foundations for a future self-governing nation.³

Though welcomed by some, the Malayan Union was condemned by the more vociferous as a betrayal of Britain's old allies and princes of the soil, the Malays. In response to unprecedented opposition from the Malays, who formed the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the British decided to negotiate with their leaders. In February 1948 the Malayan Union was replaced by a federal constitution endorsing Malay sovereignty and political privileges and considerably diluting the rights earlier promised to non-Malays. Here was an apparent return to normalcy, to Anglo-Malay collaboration.⁴ It is often said that the British, in surrendering to the opponents of the Malayan Union, lost their chance to set the country on a multiracial course; never again would they dare to indulge in the progressivism of the Malayan Union which at a stroke had attempted to end the administrative and social divides for which pre-war policy had been largely responsible. 'For some members of the non-Malay intelligentsia', the late Wong Lin Ken has written, 'the Malayan Union seems, in retrospect, to have become a historic opportunity that had been allowed to pass away with far-reaching consequences for generations'.⁵

With the inauguration of the Federation of Malaya, it is claimed, the British put constitutional issues on ice. A few months later (June 1948) the outbreak of communist insurrection reinforced Anglo-Malay collaboration and further postponed constitutional advance. Defeating the insurgents was the prime task; the British did not envisage early self-government, so this argument runs, and the Malays did not seek it at a time when the Chinese-dominated Malayan Communist Party threatened to take all. Though Attlee repeated His Majesty's Government's commitment to eventual Malayan independence, he refused to announce a constitutional review, let alone a date by which power would be transferred. Moreover, parliamentary statements with regard to Malaya's future were made as much to reassure those who accused the government of infirmity of purpose towards terrorism as to convince those who doubted the sincerity of its promise of self-government. In 1949 and 1950 Attlee insisted, lest there be a flight of planters, miners and capital from Malaya, that there would be no 'premature withdrawal'.⁶

The end of 1951 appears to mark another turning-point in the story. First Dato Onn bin Jaafar, president of UMNO and Britain's key ally, left UMNO to form another party; Anglo-Malay collaboration was jeopardized. Then, in October, High Commissioner Gurney was assassinated by insurgents and British morale sank to its lowest ebb. In the same month a plenary meeting of the Malayan Communist Party reviewed the campaign and 'virtually called off the shooting war'⁷ to concentrate on the political front. Meanwhile in the United Kingdom, parliament was dissolved and the Conservatives were returned to office. The Conservatives are generally held to have been less disposed than were Labour towards the sentimentalism of colonial self-rule. Indeed, with Lyttelton at the Colonial Office and General Templer in Malaya, firmness was injected into government. But there was enlightenment too; Templer (High Commissioner 1952-54) is usually credited with having had the perception and energy to make political advances as the best way of 'winning the hearts and minds of the people' in the campaign against communism. Under Templer citizenship was broadened, municipal elections were held and a commission for federal elections was appointed. Then, with Lennox-Boyd as Secretary of State and MacGillivray as High Commissioner, Malaya achieved almost complete self-government in 1955 and independence in 1957. 'The transition', writes Sir Richard Allen, 'from a colonial-autocratic regime to an autonomous-democratic one came with startling swiftness and achieved remarkable success. It was all accomplished in some six years.'⁸

British policy towards Malaya in the post-war years is usually seen to pass through the three phases which I have just outlined. The first is dominated by the supposedly aberrant and abortive Malayan Union experiment (1945-48); the second, from 1948 to the end of 1951, is a period of apparent drift during which, despite Labour's good intentions, there is little advance either against the communist insurgents or towards self-government; and the third, which gets under way with the return to power of the Conservative Party in October 1951, witnesses new determination and clear direction in the conduct of Malayan affairs. The combination of military vigour and political sense proves effective in combating terrorism and saving independent Malaya for the Commonwealth.

Recently released papers at the Public Record Office enable us to review the account which has been summarized above and to modify it in significant respects. They confirm the similarity of predicament in which governments of different political hues were placed when grappling with imperial problems. They reveal a clear appreciation in the highest circles of the significance of Malaya in the post-war period for Britain's influence in Asia and her recovery at home. In particular, they show an essential continuity in British strategy stretching from the so-called 'deviant' Malayan Union through the years of apparent 'drift' to the supposedly 'new course' of 1952-57.

I

Officials and politicians who had nailed their colours to the Malayan Union must were loth to accept that its replacement by the Federation was anything other than a deceleration in the speed by which the new route would be followed. Sir Edward Gent, previously Governor of the Malayan Union, set about managing its successor during the few months before his recall as if nothing had really changed. Secretary of State Creech Jones, justifying to Cabinet what elsewhere was regarded as a British *volte face*, argued that the essence of the Malayan Union—namely, a strong central government, financial stability and common citizenship—was preserved in the federal constitution.⁹ When Professor Silcock wrote to the Colonial Office criticizing the Federation and urging a return to Malayan Union progressivism, H. T. Bourdillon minuted, 'we have it in mind to proceed in many ways on the lines which Mr Silcock advocates'.¹⁰

Indeed, after 1948 genuine efforts were made to attain the basic objectives of the Malayan Union. One of these was the further consolidation of British possessions. In May 1948, shortly after the Federation had been inaugurated, the Commissioner General of South East Asia, the High Commissioner of Malaya and the Governor of Singapore met to discuss ways in which to create 'a climate of opinion in Malaya favourable to the inclusion of Singapore in some sort of constitutional union with the Federation'.¹¹ The fusion of peninsula and island had been included in the original draft of the Malayan Union scheme in 1942 but, because of its implications for imperial defence and relations between the Malays and Chinese, it had been omitted from the final version. Painstaking work for merger went on throughout 1948-51 but it was recognized that real advance depended on communal harmony. Fostering multiracialism was the keynote of British Malayan policy from 1943 until 1955 at least. Through the unofficial Communities Liaison Committee (CLC), Malcolm MacDonald (Commissioner General, South East Asia) acted as a mediator between community leaders. Very largely as a result of his behind-the-scenes diplomacy, the CLC came out publicly in favour of self-government and a Malayan nationality for the long term and, for the short term, a broadening of the Federation's restrictive citizenship provisions and moves towards elections. All these points Onn, who was a member of the CLC, and UMNO found difficult to swallow but the Secretary of State congratulated MacDonald on pursuing the multiracial course and was pleased to note 'that the agreed views of the Committee . . . are so closely in line with the fundamental aims of the policy which has been pursued by His Majesty's Government in relation to Malaya ever since the Liberation (not excluding the Malayan Union phase)'.¹² The CLC's proposals were the basis for the citizenship legislation which Gurney so carefully prepared and introduced into the legislative council in 1951 and which was eventually enacted during Templer's first year in office. This ordinance

opened the door to citizenship considerably wider for non-Malays although no progress was made in solving the more fundamental problem of creating a Malayan nationality.¹³

Progress towards a broader citizenship and elections was understandably slow. The 1948 constitution left the British in control at the centre but devolved state power upon Malays; federal (British)-state (Malay) tensions hampered day-to-day administration as well as constitutional change. Malay leaders dug in on the terms of the Federal Agreement and obstructed proposals from Kuala Lumpur which modified their position. In order to associate them more closely with federal government, High Commissioner Gurney introduced the Member system, a quasi-cabinet in which Dato Onn became the Member for Home Affairs. Proposed in March 1950 and put into effect in March 1951, the Member system enabled both officials and unofficials to be appointed as ministerial heads of departments and to gain experience of policy-making before the introduction of federal elections. In compensation for the CLC's citizenship proposals, Onn was also invited in June 1950 to be Chairman of the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA), an organization to improve the economic position of the Malays. Despite his efforts, however, RIDA did little to alleviate Malay poverty.¹⁴

Far from being shelved, the principles of the Malayan Union guided British policy after the inauguration of the Federation. Moreover, the Emergency gave immediate impetus to constitutional advance. Although HMG feared that any commitment to a specific date for independence would both hasten the flight of western capital from Malaya and kill the growth of that multiracial nation which they were nurturing, it was recognized that insurgency was bringing the day of departure ever nearer. In 1948 the government were thinking rather vaguely in terms of a 25 year transition period: it was unprecedentedly liberal without being uncomfortably close. Two years later they shortened it. MacDonald told the Secretaries of State for the Colonies and War (James Griffiths and John Strachey) during their visit to Malaya in June 1950 (the month the Korean War erupted) that the tempo 'will inevitably be accelerated by factors over which we shall have little or no control'. MacDonald cited the emergence of a new generation of Malayan leaders, the climate of opinion outside Malaya and the impact of the Emergency upon Asian expectations, and he argued:

We must be mentally prepared, therefore, to accept a quickening of the pace, and if we were to resist the pace of change we should lose the present support of Asian leaders . . . We must be in harmony with Asian leaders so that there is no discernible difference in views on which world opinion can take sides against us.¹⁵

Griffiths agreed and recommended to Cabinet that plans be laid for the introduction of social and constitutional reforms as soon as the Emergency

ended 'to demonstrate to the workers in Malaya that a non-Communist régime offered them greater opportunities for economic and social betterment than any Communist régime'.¹⁶ If the British had been defensive about their imperial record after the fall of Singapore, by the summer of 1950 they paraded progressivism with pride. In August, as they handed to the American Joint Staff Defense Survey Mission to South East Asia an extensive shopping-list for hardware necessary to counter-insurgency, MacDonald and Gurney stressed that the British in Malaya were fighting communism on the political, economic and social fronts as well as militarily. Though not, of course, prepared to name a date, MacDonald gave his American visitors an indication of the quickening pace of decolonization. He told them: 'Ideally the handover should take place after another generation but pressure from within and without would make the process more rapid, unless there was a reaction because of a breakdown in Indonesia or Burma, the transfer were more likely in 10 to 15 years.'¹⁷

The Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, was convinced that American policy in Asia, particularly as regards Korea and China, was neither as realistic nor as enlightened as that of Britain which he summarized in a Cabinet Paper of August 1950 as follows:

Since the end of the war, the policy of His Majesty's Government in South and South East Asia has been to encourage the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of that area for independence . . . In our own dependent territories His Majesty's Government are pursuing an enlightened policy of progress towards self-government within the Commonwealth, while seeking to improve the social and economic welfare of the people. That the policy pursued by His Majesty's Government has been the right one there can be no doubt, and our support of nationalism in South and South East Asia provides the best possible counter to communist subversion and penetration.¹⁸

Bevin argued that help from Britain and the USA in the economic and technical fields would be an earnest of their good intentions towards Asia and could prompt Asians to act in their own self-interest and withstand Cominform threats. Without a firm and comprehensive policy towards South East Asia the west would, he feared, quickly lose the support of a large part of a highly important region of the world.

During meetings with Dean Acheson in March 1949, Bevin, acting on a brief from MacDonald, urged the US Secretary of State to plan for South East Asia as a whole, as did the Communists, and not simply country by country, as appeared to be the American practice. Bevin and MacDonald had in mind the formation of an association of South East Asian states modelled more on the Marshall Plan than on NATO. They wanted to

convene a conference to promote South East Asian regionalism and cooperation between the west (including Australia and New Zealand) and the newly independent countries of Asia (notably India and Pakistan). But Bevin found the Americans unresponsive and the Colombo Conference of January 1950 met without them. Bevin's purpose was, as Bullock has put it, 'that like-minded countries with interests in the East should act together to resist Communism by improving the standard of life of the peoples of South East Asia'.¹⁹ To his satisfaction an aid programme—the Colombo Plan—was launched at the conference and this initiative was followed up by an American economic mission to South East Asia with a view to developing a parallel aid programme from the USA. The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, however, soured the good relations that had been developing between Asia and the west.

Constitutional advance in Malaya was part of a wider policy of winning friends in changing Asia. Of course, there were links with developments elsewhere in the Empire (notably in the area of constitutional modelling) but the context in which major Malayan decisions were taken was the context of South East Asia: it would be disastrous to lose Malaya as precipitately as the British had lost Burma or the Dutch Indonesia; it would be foolhardy to imitate the negative attitudes of the French in Indo-China. British actions were being watched by a new generation of Asian leaders.

II

In the coordination of British policies in South East Asia and in the moulding of post-war colonialism in Malaya, Malcolm MacDonald was central. From 1946 to 1948 he was Governor General, South East Asia and answerable to the Colonial Secretary for the oversight of British dependencies (Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak). As Commissioner General between 1948 and 1955 he continued to supervise the policies of colonial governments (though he was not responsible for their direct administration) and, in addition, he reported to the Foreign Secretary with regard to the independent states of the region. A broker between colonial governors, Whitehall departments, Britain and her allies, and Britain and the independent states of South East Asia, MacDonald had the job of integrating British activities in the area. He corresponded personally as well as officially with Creech Jones and Griffiths (the Labour Secretaries of State at the Colonial Office) and with Sir Thomas Lloyd (the Permanent Secretary at the Colonial Office) and he visited London regularly for high-level consultations. MacDonald was in a more commanding position to influence the direction of colonial, if not foreign, policy in South East Asia than were the governors and ambassadors who were posted to the separate countries of the region.

Son of a prime minister and himself a former Secretary of State at both Colonial and Dominions Offices, MacDonald carried weight in London

while Attlee was Prime Minister. Though some Labour politicians were suspicious of him for being the son of his father and though Colonial Office officials occasionally expressed mild irritation with his habit of appeasing firebrands like Dato Onn, MacDonald's political, departmental and diplomatic experience won him respect. His tactful and often informal handling of local leaders was generally admired and his advice, until the end of 1951, usually accepted by London. His role in convincing the Cabinet in the summer of 1946 of the wisdom of conciliating the Malays and in maintaining the momentum of constitutional advance after 1948 was crucial.

MacDonald's relations with the career civil servants, who as Governors or High Commissioners dealt directly with the administration of British dependencies, varied. With Gimson (Singapore) he seems to have been correct; with Arden-Clarke (Sarawak) MacDonald, who enjoyed playing the part of white rajah on frequent visits to Borneo, was cordial;²⁰ with Hone, who had been MacDonald's Secretary-General and then his Deputy, he was familiar. With Gent, however, he was increasingly at loggerheads and funnelled to London criticisms of his handling of both Dato Onn and the Malayan Communist Party. Gent was recalled to London in July 1948 ostensibly for consultations but actually for reposting. Gent's tragic death in an aircraft accident on the approaches to Northolt removed the pressure to find a successor immediately. Had they re-posted Gent the government would have had to announce his successor simultaneously if only to disguise the sacking as a change of guard. As it was they could argue that thoughts of replacing Gent had been far from the official mind and that they would need to take their time in choosing a worthy successor at such a critical juncture in Malaya's history.²¹

Creech Jones favoured Henry Gurney for the vacancy. Gurney had recently acquitted himself with distinction as Chief Secretary in Palestine but was now inclined to return to Oxford. MacDonald privately objected to Gurney on the grounds that he lacked both status (he had not held a governorship before) and Malayan experience, and hoped that Lord Milverton might be persuaded to take the job. Creech Jones had his way; Gurney accepted the High Commissionership albeit hesitantly; and MacDonald swallowed his pride, though, one suspects, he may have felt vindicated by Malay objections to yet another 'outside' appointment. Despite his initial reservations, however, MacDonald developed a close partnership with Gurney. The two men came to think alike on key issues such as citizenship, nationality, closer union between Malaya and Singapore, the Member system and preparations for local elections. After two years together, MacDonald paid Gurney 'a quite extraordinary tribute', describing him in a personal letter to Sir Thomas Lloyd as 'the outstanding Colonial Governor within the whole of his experience'.²² MacDonald proposed that Singapore be added to Gurney's duties when Gimson came to retire in April 1952. By then,

however, Gurney was dead and the higher ranks of colonial government had been re-ordered by Churchill and Lyttelton.

The years 1948–51 in the history of British Malaya are the years of the MacDonald–Gurney partnership. Efficient and a man of routine, Gurney excelled in the secretariat; full of charm and enjoying company and conversation, MacDonald extended business to the verandah and drawing-room. Ironically, Gurney's weakness lay in his very imperturbability, in his civil servant manner which allowed the less perceptive to underrate him and the more flamboyant to upstage him. J. M. Gullick, who worked under Gurney in Kuala Lumpur, states that 'there was a lot more to Gurney than mere professional competence in a colonial secretariat'. A sense of humour spurred him to write for *Punch* even during the stress of Palestine. His courage was beyond dispute: he caught the last plane out of Jerusalem in 1948 and he drew the terrorists' fire away from his wife and secretary at Fraser's Hill in 1951. 'Above all', writes Gullick, 'Gurney had a creative mind. If he wrote a minute on a file in his neat, round handwriting, it added something.' He was the author of schemes ranging from the Briggs Plan for re-settling squatters who gave succour to insurgents to the Employee Provident Fund which helped sustain Malayan workers in old age. Gullick recalls that Templer used to express 'the greatest admiration for all that the records showed Gurney had done'.²³

MacDonald's métier was making friends with the up-and-coming leaders of the new Asia—what a decade or so before would have been called 'taking tea with treason'. Declining the Prime Minister's offer of a title, MacDonald traded on informality. Where Governors appeared in uniform or tropical white suits, the Commissioner General paraded shirt-sleeves and a bow-tie. To many Asians he represented, if not a wind of change, at least a breath of fresh air blowing through the stuffiness of colonial society. To others—and there were progressives as well as reactionaries who distrusted him—he was a smooth talker and quick mover who projected the public persona of the approachable proconsul but deflected to those with executive responsibilities the bleak task of putting words into action. By no means bewildered by Britain's declining power, he hailed decolonization as a development from which Britain would reap moral and material rewards. He sincerely believed in the rhetoric of transforming colonies into self-governing nations; indeed, it is rather curious to read substantially the same messages in his wireless broadcasts to the Malayan peoples and his secret dispatches to Secretaries of State. Anxious to avoid at all costs the charge of 'ganging up' with the Dutch and French against Asians, MacDonald saw 'much promising material' in moderate nationalist movements in Asia and felt that 'the whole future of Britain in Asia might depend on the attitude we adopted towards them'.²⁴ Amongst his friends he counted Sultan Syahrir of Indonesia, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia and Dato Onn bin Jaafar.

The British in general did not find Onn easy to handle. His mercurial temperament and continuing bitterness about British perfidy tried their patience. Gent's relations with Onn were always sour (neither could forget the Malayan Union conflict) and even Gurney at first found it hard to share MacDonald's enthusiasm for UMNO's president. Onn was, as he himself admitted, 'ever eager for a scrap'²⁵ and his position in the crossfire between Malays and Britons, Malays and non-Malays, the Malay *raayat* and their rulers, the UMNO executive and the party rank and file encouraged him to lash out. One day the 'statesmanlike' moderate and loyal subject of his Sultan, the next he could embarrass the High Commissioner or enrage Their Highnesses.

Nevertheless, the cooperation of UMNO was essential if the Federation was to be administered, insurgency subjugated and progress made towards self-government. MacDonald insisted that Onn offered the best hope of keeping the Malays together and bridging the gulf between them and other communities. His cosmopolitanism, mixed blood and populist methods (all of which had before the war confirmed the British in their view that he was an unsuitable representative of the 'real Malay') now seemed to befit an aspiring member of that growing circle of leaders of independent Asia, and officials were encouraged when he exhibited the nationalist characteristics of an Aung San or a Sukarno. Secure in the knowledge that no UMNO leader would press for independence while there was a danger of communist (and therefore Chinese) victory, MacDonald and Gurney tried to wean UMNO from chauvinistic communalism and educate it in multiracial politics while there was still time. Creech Jones was merely echoing MacDonald and Gurney when he acknowledged that 'Onn represents the only real hope of the Malayan peoples breaking away from Race and turning to Party'.²⁶

Sensing that the British would withhold power for as long as communalism bitterly divided the peoples of Malaya, Onn attempted to open up UMNO to non-Malays. Having been rebuffed, he planned the noncommunal Independence of Malaya Party in June 1951. The British welcomed the multiracialism of the IMP but were anxious lest it undermine UMNO, and therefore Malay solidarity. Gurney explained his position in a telegram to London:

Our line is to persuade him [Onn] of the advantage of continuing to lead UMNO as well as forming new party, which is, of course, in no way an unhealthy development, but not to be godfathered on to me except in so far as I have never made any secret of the view that a united party [that is, multiracial party] would be a move in the right direction, getting away from communal politics.²⁷

Gurney appealed to Onn not to sever his links with UMNO. His plea was in vain; in late August Onn left UMNO and was succeeded by Tunku Abdul Rahman. On 16 September the IMP was formally launched in a blaze of

publicity. Quite clearly MacDonald and Gurney preferred the Dato to the Tunku. 'I am afraid', wrote Gurney of the future Prime Minister of Malaya/Malaysia, 'that he will not be the sort of leader who will be capable of holding UMNO together in any important controversy'.²⁸ Though the divorce of Onn and UMNO cast doubts on the dependability of either, Gurney retained some hope for Onn. 'But his decision to break with UMNO is a major one which may have far-reaching consequences.'²⁹ Indeed it did. Onn's record as saviour of the Malays during the Malayan Union crisis could not sustain the popularity he had enjoyed since 1946. A study of Onn's miscalculations in 1951-52 belongs more to the field of Malayan politics than to the theme of this article.³⁰ None the less, it is worth noting that, in the period before elections, Malayan leaders could have an unrealistic view of their authority and support, and that Onn in particular was becoming convinced that his identification with Malay chauvinism would impede his ascent as a truly 'national' figure. The defeat of the IMP by a local alliance of UMNO and the Malayan Chinese Association in the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections of February 1952, however, shattered Onn's career in multiracialism and initiated a different pattern in Malayan politics marked by deals struck between mutually exclusive communal parties.

Dato Onn's decline coincides with MacDonald's decreasing involvement in Malayan politics. Having backed a loser and given his friendship to a man whom the Malays no longer trusted, MacDonald was neither eager nor able to establish a similar rapport with Tunku Abdul Rahman. It is not too fanciful to suggest parallels between the careers of Dato Onn and Ramsay MacDonald (whose respective reputations Malcolm was keen to salvage); one led a class party which he 'betrayed' for the National Government in 1931, the other founded a communal party which he 'deserted' for the multiracial IMP in 1951. Bereft of a secure ally in Malaya, MacDonald was also losing the confidence of powerful men in Britain who were worried by the slow progress of the war against the communists.

III

Nation-building was intended to prepare Malaya for self-government without endangering Britain's considerable interests in the country. It has been estimated that British investment in Malaya in 1950 was rather more than £100m.³¹ Moreover, Malaya's dollar earnings were too important to lose. In 1947 rubber (of which Malaya was the world's top producer) led the list of colonial products that won dollars; it brought in \$120m and was followed by cocoa with \$50m. In 1948 the USA imported 727,000 tons of rubber, of which 371,000 came from Malaya, and 158,000 tons of tin, of which 155,000 were Malayan produced. In the same year when the sterling area suffered an overall dollar deficit of \$1,800m, there were within the empire four large dollar-earners *viz* Malaya with over \$170m, the Gold Coast with \$47.5m, the

Gambia with \$24.5m and Ceylon with \$23m. The boom in rubber and tin prices following the outbreak of the Korean War enlarged Malaya's surplus with the dollar area as follows:— \$170m (1948), \$160m (1949), \$271m (1950), \$350m (1952). While the UK's balance of payments within the sterling area slumped from +£221m in 1950 to -£540m by 1952, Malaya's position held up: +£60m (1950), +£137m (1951) and +£75m (1952).³²

In addition to its dollar-earning capacity, Malaya's military demands made it too important a colony to be left to the Colonial Office. The Emergency was the concern of Cabinet to which the Colonial Secretary made regular reports and in which sometimes conflicting views were expressed. The Foreign and Colonial Offices, for example, differed on the Chinese question. The Colonial Office complained that British recognition of communist China had compromised the Malayan government in dealing with recalcitrant Chinese. The Foreign Office accused the colonial administration of ignorance; instead of blaming interference from China for their difficulties they should, argued the FO, have got to grips much sooner with the enemy within—the Min Yuen, that network of information and food-gatherers which had been laid during the Japanese occupation and which now supplied the insurgents. The Under-Secretary who briefed Kenneth Younger (the FO Minister on the Cabinet Malaya Committee) was Robert Scott, whose immense experience of the Far East included consular service in China, Japan and Manchuria before the war, a frustrating spell on the Singapore Governor's War Council 1941-42 and a heroic record of internment during the Japanese occupation. In 1955 Scott would succeed MacDonald as Commissioner General.³³

The Ministry of Defence, meanwhile, became worried by the Malayan drain on Britain's limited resources. In the summer of 1950 the Cabinet committed itself to a defence expenditure of £3,600m for 1951-54; averaged over the years this sum represented a 50 per cent increase compared with spending in 1950-51. By January 1951, with the Korean War in full spate, the commitment for 1951-54 had risen to £4,700m or nearly double the level envisaged before the conflict.³⁴ If the Korean War enhanced the value of Malaya's exports it impeded the revival of British industry. Emmanuel Shinwell has recalled the pressures upon him as Minister of Defence in 1950:

On one side Cripps [Chancellor of the Exchequer] used every argument he could to cut expenditure on the three services. On the other Bevin [Foreign Secretary] required strengthening of the military arm in order to support his view that more trouble was looming, not only in Europe, but in the Middle East, Malaya, and Hong Kong.³⁵

In the second half of 1951 the British economy would suffer a record trade gap and current account deficit. Moreover, the guardians of the welfare state were dismayed by the government's commitment to a defence budget that

made grave inroads into those of health and social security, and in April 1951 Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman would resign when Hugh Gaitskell (Cripps' successor as Chancellor) introduced certain charges into the health service. Though the Labour government accepted the need to maintain imperial defence east of Suez it was desperate to cut its costs.

When Attlee formed his second administration after the general election of February 1950 it was clear that, if Malaya was too wealthy to lose, it was fast becoming too expensive to maintain. This had not been the case before the war when Malaya had paid for its own administration and local defence, and had made substantial contributions to imperial defence as well. Shortly after becoming Minister of Defence, Shinwell persuaded Attlee to form a Cabinet Committee on Malaya.³⁶ At a time when Britain was building up a strategic reserve and preparing for imminent global conflict, men and materials were being sidetracked into the Malayan theatre. The lack of obvious success against the insurgents provoked criticism of the structure, policies and personalities of the British civil authorities in South East Asia. Service chiefs grew impatient with the pace at which the Malayan police and civil administrators assumed responsibilities in the campaign.

General Sir John Harding (Commander-in-Chief Far East Land Forces) told Field Marshall Slim (Chief of the Imperial General Staff): 'the great need in S. E. Asia today is for really inspiring and courageous leadership at the highest level'. He suggested the creation of a *supremo* for the region as a whole with greater local power and more weight in Cabinet than the Commissioner General currently enjoyed. While MacDonald was 'a great enthusiast for S. E. Asia' and had 'long experience of its problems', Harding reckoned that he had 'too many political inhibitions and local personal ties to be sufficiently forceful and insistent in using the overriding powers he would have to exercise' were he to be upgraded to the position of *supremo*. Slim accepted that 'all was not well with the higher overall direction of affairs in the Far East'.³⁷

The Korean War, as Kenneth Morgan has put it, 'cast a sombre shadow over the last phase of the Attlee Government'.³⁸ In late November 1950 China entered the conflict and on the night of 3 December Attlee, fearful that Truman was contemplating the use of the atomic bomb, flew to Washington. While he was able to reassure Cabinet on this score on 12 December, ministers were still afraid that American retaliation against the Chinese could provoke them to invade Hong Kong and drive south through Indo-China and towards Malaya.³⁹ On the day the Prime Minister returned from Washington, John Strachey, Secretary of State for War, wrote him a personal and top secret memorandum urging the thorough overhaul of the civil authorities in South East Asia. Simultaneously but coincidentally, religious riots (in which Europeans and Eurasians were the target of Muslim fanatics) erupted in Singapore; in addition to their misgivings about the Federation of Malaya, the military now had their doubts about the competence of the

island colony's police and senior civil servants. Strachey's left-wing intellectualism did not endear him to some of his generals but in this attack on civil rule in Malaya he did not pull his punches. Officials were, he wrote, too liberal when they should be ruthless and too conservative when they should be progressive. Strachey accepted that MacDonald—they had been up at Oxford together—had done 'an admirable job' but pointed out that he was feeling 'the strain of Malaya' and should be re-posted. He did not hide his scorn for 'the middle rank of officials and administrators' and those who still 'hanker for the old colonialism'. He argued that the political and social reforms being planned for after the Emergency should be brought forward by a new supremo for the region who would combine toughness with enlightenment.⁴⁰

Both Harding and Strachey suggested Mountbatten for the job of South East Asia's Governor General. Other candidates being canvassed included Alanbrooke, Auchinleck and Montgomery. Though they had the successes of General de Lattre de Tassigny in Indo-China to hand, the Imperial General Staff were not enthusiastic about the proposal to appoint a military governor-general. They insisted that the Malayan problem was 'essentially a civil administrative problem' and that 'the Army can do no more than give the civil administration the necessary support'. Slim wanted to 'instill a sense of urgency into the Colonial Office', not take on its responsibilities.⁴¹

IV

In view of what we now know about the commitment of MacDonald and Gurney to social and political progress, it may seem strange that the Malayan administration was not shining like a beacon in the naughty world of old colonialism and cold war but was being taken to task, and by the military of all people, for its lack of enlightenment. To be fair, the estimable efforts of Commissioner General and High Commissioner were acknowledged, though Field Marshall Montgomery and Sultan Ibrahim of Johore had little taste for MacDonald's style. Nevertheless, one wonders whether the generals, secure in their well-defined command structure, appreciated the complexities of civil rule, of managing a federal constitution, of engineering political evolution. Indeed, Gurney complained that the federal constitution encumbered counter-insurgency and political progress, and that Malayan civil servants in Britain kept alive pre-war attitudes from which he was trying to emancipate Malaya. 'One of the difficulties I have to contend with here', he protested to Sir Thomas Lloyd, 'is the part played by old retired Malaysians, years out of date, in encouraging locally the survival of their ideas',⁴² and the Colonial Office ruefully recalled the campaign of the Old Malaysians against the Malayan Union in 1946. As regards the strictures against MacDonald's apparently informal methods, it should be noted that he did not have the authority to intervene directly in the administration of Malayan

affairs. Moreover, he felt he functioned best as a co-ordinator of policies and as a catalyst for political consensus, and he let it be known that he did not want enlarged powers.

In response to Strachey's appeal for radical reorganization, Attlee convened a ministerial meeting for 26 February 1951 to which MacDonal was summoned from overseas. It is not entirely clear from the papers which I have seen whether this meeting met Strachey's points head-on. At any rate the highest civil command remained intact although the Colonial Secretary asked MacDonal to investigate personally and in consultation with Gurney the desirability of getting rid of some of the older and less energetic officers in senior posts, a number of whom may have been suffering from the effects of wartime internment. When the Commission of Inquiry into the Singapore riots of December 1950 published its report in May, the Secretary of State accepted the need to strengthen the island's government at the highest levels and was on the look-out for a dynamic successor to Governor Gimson who was due to go on leave in November prior to retirement in April 1952.⁴³

By June 1951, however, the CIGS was more optimistic about the Briggs Plan in Malaya. A year earlier General Briggs, Director of Operations, had introduced his scheme to evacuate Chinese squatters from jungle fringes to new villages in order to deprive the insurgents of their vital sources of intelligence and rice. Having started sluggishly there was now every prospect of completing the resettlement of half a million Chinese by the end of the year. Slim was also pleased to 'have ginned up the Civil to be fairly effective' and no longer favoured 'the idea of a Military Governor General'.⁴⁴ Despite some disquiet about the flaws in the government of Singapore revealed in the Hertogh riots and their possible repercussions in Malaya, there was generally more confidence about the security situation than there had been for a long time. The Colonial Office and War Office accepted the existing structure of government and agreed on the nomination of Sir Rob Lockhart as Director of Operations when General Briggs came up for retirement towards the end of 1951.⁴⁵

In October the assassination of Gurney and the change of government at home brought to a head this long-running review of Malayan affairs. On entering office, the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, R. A. Butler, reported to Cabinet what Gaitskell had been forewarning his Labour colleagues, namely that Britain faced a balance of payments crisis worse than that of 1949 and even in some respects worse than that of 1947.⁴⁶ Within a few days of being appointed Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton recognized the Malayan problem as his first priority and, in spite of the Conservatives' precarious majority in the House of Commons, forthwith asked Churchill for leave to examine the situation for himself.⁴⁷ The new Minister of Defence, Churchill himself, set his staff two questions: 'What is the cost per month or per quarter of this enormous force? Is "a retired Indian Army Officer" [that is, Lockhart] the best person to pick for a job which obviously requires

intense virile action?⁴⁸ The cost of the Malayan campaign to Britain was estimated at £56m per annum (there were other charges, of course, which were borne by the Malayan government). This was excessive at such a crisis in the balance of payments. As for persons, 'we need "the spark"', wrote Montgomery, bombarding Churchill, Lyttelton and Slim with his views. 'We must electrify Malaya.' The 'waffler' MacDonald 'must go' as must 'duds' like the Chief Secretary (Del Tufo) and the Commissioner of Police (Gray). Montgomery called for a master-plan and urged the creation of a 'Dominion of South East Asia, under one Governor General'.⁴⁹

The Cabinet stopped short of appointing a supremo for the whole of South East Asia but they did approve Lyttelton's recommendation (presented soon after his return from his Malayan tour) that one man be appointed both High Commissioner and Director of Operations in Malaya.⁵⁰ Who should he be? It has been suggested that Montgomery himself wanted the job. It is clear from the papers I have seen that the Imperial General Staff considered him to be unsuitable.⁵¹ Oliver Lyttelton in his *Memoirs* refers to the Field Marshal's concern about the Malayan crisis but makes no mention of his candidature. Lyttelton's first choice was General Sir Brian Robertson, who was reluctant to leave his post as Commander-in-Chief Middle East Land Forces. He next considered Slim, who declined on grounds of age. He then worked through a War Office short-list coming to Sir Gerald Templer and 'was sure that he was the man'. Churchill took a close interest in Malaya in the months November 1951-February 1952 and insisted on seeing Lyttelton's nominee. Templer was flown out to Ottawa to dine with Churchill. If 'the General's sobriety was subjected to some strain' he none the less 'won the Prime Minister's confidence'.⁵²

MacDonald was critical of the merger of civil and military responsibilities in the person of a general but his own position was not strong. The Commissioner General's powers in Malaya, notably in defence matters, were clipped and the Foreign Office made it plain that it would not object to the abolition of the Commissioner Generalship altogether since it was expensive. Lyttelton felt that the need for administrative continuity at a time when several major changes of personnel were being made together with MacDonald's local popularity warranted the extension of the Commissioner General's tour for three or four months beyond May 1952 when he was due to be relieved. Ministers agreed to postpone a decision on the future of the office until the late summer.⁵³ As it happened, MacDonald stayed at his post in South East Asia until 1955, when he was transferred to New Delhi as British High Commissioner, and the post of Commissioner General in South East Asia lasted until the formation of Malaysia in 1963. However, although he survived the shake-up of 1952, MacDonald was never to enjoy the same influence on Malayan policy that he had wielded between 1946 and 1951.

V

In their reorganization of Malayan administration the Conservatives did not initiate a new course; they completed a review which had been going on for at least 18 months and they improved the means to attain objectives which had been set by Cabinet as early as May 1944 and regularly repeated since.⁵⁴ British successes recorded from 1952 onwards in large measure rested on developments originating before the arrival of the Conservative government, notably the Briggs resettlement plan and the premium placed upon constitutional developments. Though Lyttelton startled the Malayan press by declaring on his arrival at Singapore airport in early December 1951 that 'to restore law and order is the first thing', he later referred both those who criticized and those who welcomed what appeared to be his reactionary hard-headedness to the directive issued to Templer in February.⁵⁵ This directive, which the Prime Minister had personally approved, opened with these words: 'The policy of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom is that Malaya should in due course become a fully self-governing nation. His Majesty's Government confidently hope that that nation will be within the British Commonwealth.' Having made reference to the terms of the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948, the directive continued: 'To achieve a united Malayan nation there must be a common form of citizenship for all who regard the Federation or any part of it as their real home and the object of their loyalty.'⁵⁶ Like his Labour predecessors, Lyttelton looked forward to the emergence of a broader citizenship, a Malayan nationality and a multiracial political movement.

British policy towards Malaya before the fall of Singapore had rested on the assumption that British rule would endure indefinitely; after the war the government accepted that independence would come in a generation. It is, however, unlikely that the archives will reveal a clearly formulated decision to quit Malaya. I am not suggesting that Britain lost her empire in the manner that some have said she acquired it—in a fit of absence of mind—but that thinking focused upon the practicalities, not the imponderables, of retreat. The major issue of Britain's declining world power was not a matter for government decision; it was a trend to which wise men adjusted. By the late 1940s decolonization had entered the official mind of British imperialism. The transformation of rhetoric into policy is beyond the scope of this article but it will not be satisfactorily explained solely in terms of trade balances and fiscal arithmetic. There was a mental revolution; with India out of the empire and safely in the Commonwealth, Britain had breached the psychological barrier to the transfer of power which the Dutch and French found so agonizing to surmount. The ideology of 'trusteeship', touched up with 'partnership', cushioned British *amour propre* as they skirted the problem of why they were withdrawing in order to make the best arrangements for departure.

When the Malayan Union was drafted in 1943-45 great play was made

with progressive ideas but it was then believed that Malayan independence was safely distant. Post-war events jarred this measured approach. On the one hand Malay opposition to the Malayan Union obliged the British to defer the implementation of their immediate aims (that is, administrative union and a broad citizenship); on the other hand the Emergency and developments outside Malaya hastened preparations for self-government. Desiring the continued enjoyment of the fruits of Malaya without the back-breaking toil of its government, the British made shift to lead its peoples from empire to commonwealth by transferring power to leaders who would command local support and serve British interests. Though Malayan nationhood was still accepted as the prerequisite for Malayan independence, MacDonald and Gurney (in their plans for citizenship reform, local elections and the Member system) began to juggle with both objectives simultaneously. Indeed, constitutional concessions became the tools for the fabrication of the nation. During the MacDonald-Gurney partnership, and during the Lyttelton-Templer partnership too, government remained convinced that the transfer of real power to Malaysians must wait upon the evolution of a multiracial political movement. In 1955-57 this progression was reversed as the British granted self-government to an ethnically divided society and went along with the politics of communalism in the hope that the challenges and responsibilities of independence would in time fashion a Malayan identity.

Although things did not turn out quite as they had hoped, in this story of apparently graceful and voluntary concession to a stable and cooperative regime MacDonald and Gurney—though impeded by the federal constitution, inhibited by Malayan politics and eventually overshadowed by the more obvious successes of Templer and MacGillivray—maintained the momentum of that new course in British Malayan policy which had been triggered by the fall of Singapore in 1942. In this account of continuity and change in British policy we have seen that while the Labour government were no less dutiful than the Conservatives in upholding Britain's world position and defending imperial outposts, the Conservatives on their return to power in 1951 followed the route towards constitutional advance and nation-building blazed by the wartime coalition and Attlee administrations.

Notes

- * This article is a version of a paper given at the 9th Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia in Manila, Philippines, November 1983. I wish to acknowledge the support of the British Institute in South East Asia which enabled me to attend.
- 1 The first of these phrases is from a minute by G. Grindle about Ceylon, 25 Jan. 1927, Public Record Office, CO 537/692; the second is from a minute by Sir Samuel Wilson about the Federated Malay States, 2 Nov: 1927, CO 717/58; 29223.
- 2 Before 1942 British Malaya consisted of the Colony of the Straits Settlements

- (Penang, Malacca and Singapore) and nine Protected Malay States, four of which had been grouped together as the Federated Malay States. According to the 1931 census the total population was 5,849,000 persons of whom 44.4% were Malays, 39.2% Chinese, 14.3% Indians and 2.1% were 'others'. The term 'Malayan' denoted either the country as a whole or the people as a whole, and in the post-war period it had connotations of multiracialism.
- 3 For the Malayan Union and the Malay reaction to it see A. J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948* (Kuala Lumpur, 1979); also J. de V. Allen, *The Malayan Union* (New Haven, 1967), and C. Mary Turnbull, 'British Planning for Post-war Malaya', *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, 5, ii (1974). For the Colonial Office during the Second World War see J. M. Lee and Martin Petter, *The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy: Organisation and the Planning of a Metropolitan Initiative, 1939-1945* (London, 1982).
 - 4 In 1974 I wrote in this journal: 'Despite its intent to break with the past, the British scheme for post-war Malaya was received with such hostility that policy was rapidly revised in accordance with those criteria which had commanded Anglo-Malay relations before the war.' *JICH*, II, 3 (1974), 347. Ten years later I am not disputing that the surprising wave of Malay nationalism forced the British to water down the principles of the Malayan Union in the federal settlement of 1948. Nevertheless, examination of the papers relating to the subsequent years shows that the Colonial Office retained those principles as their ultimate goal for Malaya. During 1948-52, relying on the patient negotiation suited to a situation where Malay rights were enshrined in the 1948 constitution instead of the abrupt methods that had been employed during the reoccupation of 1945-46, they sought to achieve a coherent administrative structure and the basis for Malayan nationhood.
 - 5 'The Malayan Union: A Historical Retrospect', *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, XII, 1 (1982), 184.
 - 6 Great Britain, 463, H. C. Deb., 5s (13 April 1949), c2815 and 473 H. C. Deb., 5s (28 March 1950), cc180-1.
 - 7 V. Purcell cited in A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-60* (London, 1975) 318. Though Short calls this an 'extravagant' assessment of the directives issued by the Central Committee of the Malayan Communist Party in October 1951, he none the less stresses 'the primacy of political considerations in the October Directives', *ibid.*, 321.
 - 8 Sir Richard Allen *Malaysia: Prospect and Retrospect* (London, 1968) 105.
 - 9 Public Record Office, PREM 8/459, C(46)6, 29 Nov. 1946.
 - 10 CO 537/3670, minute by H. T. Bourdillon, 12 Jan. 1948.
 - 11 CO 537/3669, minute by O. Morris, 8 Sept. 1948. See also CO 537 nos. 4743, 5962 and 7251.
 - 12 CO 717/183: 52928/17 (1949), Creech Jones to MacDonald, personal and private, 24 Oct. 1949. Cf. CO 537/6018 on the CLC.
 - 13 K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965) 89.
 - 14 On the formation of RIDA see CO 537 nos. 6018, 6020 and 7297.
 - 15 CO 537/5970, minutes of Commissioner General's Conference, 7 June 1950; cf. CO 537/5962.
 - 16 Public Record Office, CAB 128/17: 37(50)1, 19 June 1950. James Griffiths in his *Pages from Memory* (London, 1969) 94-101 does not reveal much about his Malayan trip.
 - 17 CO 537/5966, note on meeting between MacDonald *et al.* and the American Joint

- Staff Defense Survey Mission to South East Asia (led by John F. Melby), 8 Aug. 1950.
- 18 PREM 8/1171: CP(50)200, 30 Aug. 1950.
 - 19 Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951* (London, 1983) 747, see also 611-12, 673, 720, 743-7.
 - 20 See David Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke* (London, 1982) 67-73, 80-81, and Malcolm MacDonald, *Borneo People* (London, 1956).
 - 21 CO 537/3686 contains correspondence and telegrams between Creech Jones and MacDonald relating to Gent's recall and the appointment of his successor. On 24 Aug. 1948 MacDonald, looking back on Gent's regime, wrote that he had forfeited Onn's trust (MacDonald to Creech Jones, CO 537/3756).
 - 22 CO 537/5962, T. Lloyd to J. Paskin, 5 Oct. 1950, reporting a private letter he had received from MacDonald.
 - 23 Letter from J. M. Gullick (formerly of the MCS) to me, 4 June 1984. I am grateful to Mr Gullick for his comments on a draft of this paper.
 - 24 CO 537/2177, minute by Bourdillon, 21 Jan. 1948, on discussions with MacDonald on the subject of Indonesian influences in Malaya. For some insight into MacDonald's methods see his *People and Places* (London, 1969) and *Titans and Others* (London, 1972).
 - 25 CO 537/6020, Onn to Gurney, 26 June 1950.
 - 26 CO 537/7303, Secretary of State as reported by J. D. Higham to Gurney, secret and personal, 6 July 1951.
 - 27 *Ibid.*, Gurney to Higham, telegram, 22 June 1951.
 - 28 CO 537/7297, Gurney to Higham, confidential, 29 Aug. 1951.
 - 29 CO 537/7303, Gurney to Higham, secret and personal, 13 June 1951.
 - 30 See Gordon Means, *Malaysian Politics* (London, 1970) 124-7, 132-7; R. K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society* (Kuala Lumpur, 1971) 37-82; Karl von Vorys, *Democracy without Consensus* (Princeton, 1975) 96-112.
 - 31 Phillip Darby, *British Defence Policy East of Suez 1947-1968* (London, 1973) 25.
 - 32 CAB 129/48: C(51)22, 19 Nov. 1951; CO 852/989; FO 371/76049.
 - 33 For Scott's career see his obituary in *The Times*, 2 March 1982; for his advice see Public Record Office, FO 371/84478.
 - 34 For the Cabinet papers on defence expenditure in the period July 1950-February 1951 see CAB 129/41: CP(50)181 and 188; CAB 129/42: CP(50)246, 247 and 248; CAB 129/44: CP(51)16, 20, 25, 32, 34, 36, 47 and 64. See also Cabinet minutes for meetings in November 1950, CAB 128/18: CM 70(50)1, CM 72(50)7 and CM 74(50)4.
 - 35 Emmanuel Shinwell, *I've lived through it all* (London, 1973) 198.
 - 36 For the Cabinet Committee on Malaya see CAB 134/497, FO 371/84478, PREM 8/1126 and PREM 8/1406.
 - 37 Public Record Office, WO 216/835, Harding to Slim, personal and top secret, 24 Oct. 1950; Slim to Harding, top secret, 21 Nov. 1950.
 - 38 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945-1951* (Oxford, 1984) 422.
 - 39 See Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London, 1982) 462 ff; Philip M. Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell* (London, 1979) 242 ff; and Philip M. Williams (ed.), *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell 1945-1956* (London, 1983) 226.
 - 40 PREM 8/1406, Strachey to Attlee, top secret and personal, 11 Dec. 1950. Cf. Hugh Thomas, *John Strachey* (New York, 1973) 264. On the Maria Hertogh or Nadra riots in Singapore and the unease of the Ministry of Defence see CO 537/7247 and FO 371/93117.
 - 41 WO 216/835, VCIQS to CIGS, top secret and personal, 24 Feb. 1951; Slim to Harding, top secret, 21 Nov. 1950.

- 42 CO 537/7257, Gurney to Lloyd, 27 July 1951.
- 43 CO 537/7247.
- 44 WO 216/394, Slim to VCIGS, 25 June 1951.
- 45 CO 537/7267 and WO 216/394. Sir Rob Lockhart (brother of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart who was the writer, diplomat and author of *Return to Malaya*, 1936) stayed on in Malaya as Deputy Director of Operations when Templer was appointed Director.
- 46 CAB 129/47: CP(51)243, 3 Sept. 1951, memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Gaitskell) on the balance of payments position; and CAB 129/48: C(51)1, 31 Oct. 1951, memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (R. A. Butler) on the economic position. Butler's memorandum was the first Cabinet Paper of the new government.
- 47 PREM 11/122, Lyttelton to Prime Minister, 30 Oct. 1951; Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London, 1962) 362.
- 48 WO 216/446, Churchill to Sir K. McLean, 6 Nov. 1951.
- 49 PREM 11/121, private and secret letters from Montgomery to Slim, 3 Dec.; to Lyttelton, 27 Dec. and 30 Dec. 1951; to Prime Minister, 2 Jan. and 4 Jan.; plus 'Success in Malaya. Note by Field Marshal Montgomery', 2 Jan. 1952 Cf. Lyttelton, *Memoirs*, 378-9.
- 50 CAB 128/23: 10(51)2, 22 Nov. 1951; 20(51)1, 28 Dec. 1951.
- 51 Short, 325-6; WO 216/835, VCIGS to CIGS, top secret and personal, 24 Feb. 1951.
- 52 Lyttelton, 379-81.
- 53 CAB 130/74: Cabinet Committee on Malaya, 10 Jan. 1952.
- 54 CAB 98/41 and CAB 65/42 WM(44) 70th conclusions, minute 3, 31 May 1944.
- 55 Lyttelton, 364; CO 1022/81.
- 56 CO 1022/102.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN MALAYA'S PLURAL SOCIETY

J. Norman Parmer

Source: *Far Eastern Survey* 26(10) (1957): 145-52.

Nineteen hundred and fifty-seven will be remembered as a most important year in the history of modern Malaya. More numerous and fundamental political and economic changes have occurred this year than in many decades of association with the British Crown. On August 31, Merdeka Day, the Federation of Malaya became an independent, sovereign nation. Prior to this event, Malayan and British statesmen had to make many decisions, but the chief task confronting them and the main issue before the country since early 1956 was the drafting of a constitution.¹

Before August 31 the Federation of Malaya was little more than a powerful administrative apparatus serving the nine British-protected Malay States, each juridically sovereign, and the two British Settlements of Penang and Malacca. It was established by the British to provide uniform laws and a more efficient economic and financial framework than could be obtained by eleven political units going their separate ways. The most fundamental object of recent constitutional planning was therefore to unite and subsume the ten sovereignties under a new single sovereignty, to convert the federal administration, a *de facto* national government, into a *de jure* national state. Few of the problems arising in drafting a constitution for a united Malaya were new; most of them stemmed from Malaya's plural society. A quick review of Malaya's constitutional history will provide useful perspective.

The British position in the Peninsula from the 1870's was that of protector to the Malay States, a relationship defined by treaties with each of the Malay Sultans or Rulers. British officers actually wielded executive power and the States prospered. Chinese and Indians were encouraged to immigrate to work mines and plantations, but no attempt was made to assimilate them. They were long regarded as sojourners, as most of them at first were, and British authorities declared that their responsibilities were only to the Malay

people. Insofar as Malayan-centered politics existed before World War II, they were mostly concerned with charges by a few domiciled Chinese and Indians that British policies were pro-Malay and unfair to them. Some declared that the British position might be defensible if genuine efforts were made to safeguard and promote Malay interests. They implied that half of the Dual Mandate was not being carried out. Interestingly, a body of influential British opinion in London held approximately the same view. Its representations led to the decentralization policies of the 1920's and 1930's which aimed at giving certain of the States some of the substance as well as the form of power. The ultimate goal was to embrace all of the States in a union.²

The British took the opportunity presented by the end of the Japanese Occupation and the re-establishment of their authority in 1945 to obtain the union of the nine States which they had sought before the war. The Malayan Union constitution promulgated in 1946 was, however, based on principles radically different from those which had prevailed prewar.³ New treaties with the Rulers, upon which the Malayan Union was based, scrapped the old protectorate status and yielded Malay sovereignty to Great Britain. Most alarming to the Malays was the new constitution's conferment of citizenship on Malays and non-Malays without distinction. In short, the prewar pro-Malay policy had been abandoned.

The Malayan Union, however, was stillborn. Many of the Chinese and Indians in Malaya were apathetic or absorbed in the politics of China and India. The Malays on the other hand displayed a political fervor unknown before the war and protested seeming British treachery in giving non-Malays equal status with themselves. With a total Chinese and Indian population outnumbering them, the Malays (who are mainly farmers, policemen and civil servants) feared that they would be overwhelmed by the non-Malays (who predominate in business, the professions and the labor force).⁴ An articulate minority of domiciled Chinese and Indians failed to meet the Malay onslaught on the Malayan Union constitution; instead, they fruitlessly criticized it for its autocratic features. British authorities confronted by Malay denunciation, which was encouraged by conservative pro-Malay British opinion in London, replaced the Malayan Union with a federation.

The Federation of Malaya inaugurated in February 1948 had the effect of restoring sovereignty to the Malay Rulers and of re-establishing the old treaty-protectorate relationship between Britain and the States.⁵ Moreover, the Federation Agreement—the constitution of the Federation—declared that “the special position of the Malays” and “the legitimate interests of other communities” must be safeguarded. Citizenship qualifications discriminated against non-Malays. Chinese and Indians now bitterly charged that the pro-Malay policy had been resumed and that British imperialism and Malay feudalism were again united. Actually the Federation should be regarded as a reprieve, a breathing space in which the Malays might have

somehow prepared for the day when demands for equality in citizenship and rights by non-Malays could not be refused.

The British authorities after 1948 gave some thought to resolving the plural society problem. Besides planning a unified system of national education, the British explored the idea of a gradual exchange of Malay political power for Chinese economic power. Studies were made and tentative steps taken, but the results were almost nil.⁶ The main difficulty was that Chinese economic strength was the result of considerable business acumen combined with decades of hard work and accumulation of wealth, whereas Malay political strength in most parts of the Peninsula—at anything above the local level—was largely British-created and British-operated. What the Malays enjoyed was mostly political privilege and not political power.

Partly because of latent anxieties of Malaysians⁷ about their plural society, agitation for political freedom was markedly unemotional when compared with that in neighboring countries. Nevertheless, politics and Malay nationalism did not wait on a satisfactory solution to the plural society problem. The drastic Emergency regulations, necessary to cope with the Communist rebellion which began in 1948, discouraged political activity for a time. But from 1952 political parties became increasingly active. Independence was the primary issue; parties differed chiefly on the steps towards and the timing of self-government. Britain responded rather quickly; beginning in 1951 several hundred largely State elections were held in 1954; and the first Federal Legislative Council elections (i.e., national elections) were held in July 1955. The party which won virtually all elections was the Alliance, and, under the leadership of Tengku Abdul Rahman, it has provided a government for the Federation since 1955.⁸

The Alliance is really a coalition of three communal parties: the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). With fervor and votes mainly from its Malay members and funds and organizing know-how from its Chinese members, the Alliance pursued self-rule more aggressively than any other party. Nevertheless it is basically conservative; for nearly five years it has been characterized by its opponents as a marriage of convenience which cannot last between Malay aristocrats and Chinese capitalists. Malay critics charge that the UMNO has sold out Malay interests for Chinese money while Chinese critics declare that the MCA has not taken a strong enough stand in representing Chinese interests. Actually, Alliance leaders are able men, conscious of their problems, and they have sought to develop a better, more unified organization.

Opposition parties

Opposition to the Alliance includes three Malay communal parties of uncertain following but of more than local significance: the Party Negara,

the Pan-Malayan Islamic Association or Party and Party Ra'ayat. Negara is the successor to the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) as a vehicle for the political aspirations of Dato Onn bin Ja'afar. Unlike the non-communal IMP, Negara espouses a narrow Malay nationalism. The Islamic Party is distinguished because it holds the only non-Alliance elected seat in the Federal Legislative Council. Its president, Dr. Burhanuddin (an Indonesian by birth), who was president of the old Malay Nationalist Party active in pre-Emergency days, favors ties with Indonesia and peaceful methods to fight communism. The Party Ra'ayat seeks support among rural Malays. Its president, Inche Ahmad Boestamam, released in 1955 after seven years' detention under the Emergency regulations, opposes capitalism and communism and calls for agrarian reform and a socialist state. Negara and the Islamic Party have united with smaller Malay groups as well as UMNO defectors to form a Malay Congress. Boestamam has directed his primary efforts at organizing a National Socialist Front. All three parties aim at undermining Malay support for UMNO and seek a following on Malaya's East Coast where the Malay population predominates. Chinese and Indian opponents of the Alliance have had little organization.

Other opposition parties have sought to make an appeal based on class rather than community interests. Among these is the illegal Malayan Communist Party (MCP) whose membership is almost entirely Chinese; the oldest political party in Malaya, it has long endeavored to widen its membership to other communities but without much success. In recent years, labor parties have been formed, and most of these are now merged in the Labour Party of Malaya.⁹ The Labour Party has been handicapped by its non-communal appeal, the Emergency and opportunism. Trade unions, partly because of legal barriers now removed and partly by choice, have given little support to labor politicians. Reservation of appointed seats in the Federal Legislative Council assured unions of a voice without having to contest for it at the polls. While the Labour Party has had some local election successes, labor's political potential is yet to be realized.

In the Federal election campaign of 1955, Alliance candidates promised to push for full self-rule. Talks between Alliance leaders and the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London in January 1955 resulted in further concessions by Britain. Moreover, August 31, 1957 was tentatively set as the date for the transfer of power, and it was agreed to appoint a commission from Commonwealth countries to make recommendations for a new constitution.¹⁰ A commission of five members was subsequently appointed under the chairmanship of Lord Reid of the United Kingdom.¹¹

The terms of reference of the Reid Commission determined much of the substance of its recommendations. It was to recommend a federal form of government for a "single, self-governing unit within the Commonwealth based on Parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislature . . ." The central government was to be strong although the State and Settlement

governments were to enjoy "a measure of autonomy." The Commissioners were to safeguard the "special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities." They were to provide for a common nationality and a constitutional head of state who would be chosen from among the Malay Rulers.¹² The Commission visited the Federation between June and October 1956; Malaysians spent much of 1956 in vigorous constitutional debate.

The most controversial issues were citizenship, language and Malay privileges.¹³ For citizenship, the Malays favored a stiff residential qualification plus a knowledge of Malay. The Chinese favored the principle of *jus soli* and easy residential qualifications for the foreign-born. The Malays wanted the Malay language to be the sole official language, although many were willing to retain English for a limited period until Malay has been expanded on the Indonesian model.¹⁴ The Chinese asked that Chinese also be made an official language. Finally, the Malays declared that without constitutional guarantees of privileges (e.g., reservation of civil service positions, scholarships and business licenses) they would be overwhelmed by non-Malays. The Chinese opposed special privileges for Malays. Another question of vital importance to some was the future status of persons born in the British Settlements and others in the Malay States who were British subjects. Such persons were anxious over Britain's relinquishment of sovereignty, and they urged that citizens of independent Malaya be permitted to have Commonwealth citizenship, thus permitting them to retain a tie with Britain, India, Ceylon or some other Commonwealth country.

Alliance leaders chose to come to grips with these issues by submitting one memorandum and forbidding their supporters to submit the views of each member party. The Alliance subsequently nearly broke up; a split was avoided largely on the plea that disunity would delay independence. The Alliance memorandum as finally produced favored the Malays over the non-Malays, although Malay opposition parties did not regard it as favorable enough. Numerous political and other organizations from all communities submitted their views to the Commission. The most significant memorandum was that drawn up by representatives of several hundred Chinese guilds and associations.

The Reid Commission reported in February of this year. Its recommendations on the organization and powers of government followed its terms of reference. On the controversial issue of citizenship the Commission followed the Alliance memorandum on the ground that the views therein were reasonable compromises among the communities. It recommended that (1) persons who were citizens on independence day should remain so; (2) persons born in the Federation on or after independence day should by law be citizens; (3) persons born in the Federation before independence day should be entitled to citizenship on showing proof of five years' residence in the previous seven years, making a declaration of

permanent residence, taking an oath of allegiance, further declaring not to exercise rights they might possess under the nationality laws of another nation and showing a knowledge of the Malay language; (4) persons not born in the Federation but resident there on independence day should be entitled to citizenship by showing proof of eight years' residence in the previous twelve years and making the above declarations; and (5) other persons should be eligible for citizenship on showing proof of ten years' residence in a period of twelve years and meeting other qualifications. The Commission further recommended that all Federation citizens be Commonwealth citizens.

Malay was proposed as the official national language with English retained for ten years. For a like period, the use of Chinese and Indian languages would be permitted in Parliament where the member could not speak either Malay or English. An Alliance recommendation that Islam be the official religion was not accepted. Regarding Malay privileges, the Commission recommended that Malay quotas and preferences already in force in respect to acquisition of land, admission to the public service, the issuing of licenses and the awarding of education aids should remain in force. But after fifteen years, these privileges should be reviewed by Parliament to determine whether they should be reduced or discontinued.¹⁵

Reactions to the Reid recommendations were divided on communal lines. UMNO spokesmen—undoubtedly with the Chinese in mind—opposed Commonwealth citizenship or any suggestion of dual nationality. They rejected the implied time limit on Malay privileges and reiterated their demand that Islam be the state religion. The second annual Malay Congress meeting in May echoed these views. Chinese outside the MCA, as well as some individuals within, expressed disappointment that Chinese views had not been incorporated in the recommendations. Chinese protests subsequently crystallized in the loose Federation of Chinese Guilds and Associations which claimed to represent two million Chinese in more than a thousand organizations of all kinds.

Revision of Reid recommendations

A working party of representatives of Britain, the Rulers and the Alliance discussed the Reid recommendations between February and April and further talks were held in London in May. Agreement in principle on controversial points was reached. Parties other than the Alliance were not consulted, but present in London was a delegation from the Federation of Chinese Guilds and Associations. Their representations to the Colonial Secretary came to nothing; Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd urged them to accept the draft constitution, which was then in preparation and which, incorporating revisions of the Reid recommendations, was published on July 3 as a White Paper.¹⁶

The proposed structure of government remained largely unaltered. The federal government was to consist of the Paramount Ruler (*Yang di-Pertuan Agong*) chosen from among the Malay Rulers on a seniority basis for a term of five years; a Parliament composed of a Senate (*Dewan Negara*) of 38 members, 22 elected by State legislatures and 16 appointed by the Paramount Ruler, and a House of Representatives (*Dewan Ra'ayat*) of 100 members directly elected in single member constituencies on a territorial basis; a Cabinet (*Juma'ah Menteri*) collectively responsible to Parliament; and a Conference of Rulers (*Majlis Raja Raja*) which would elect the Paramount Ruler and have certain advisory functions. State governments would have some legislative powers, and the Rulers were to be constitutional heads of their States.

In regard to citizenship, three important changes were made. Under the draft constitution, persons not born in the Federation but resident there on August 31 were to be *eligible* for citizenship (Art. 17) but not *entitled* to it, as proposed by the Reid Commission. They were to be granted citizenship at the discretion of an authority whose decisions could not be appealed. Next, the oath of allegiance (Art. 18) was made more comprehensive and included in it was a forceful renunciation of loyalty to any other country. Finally, all Federation nationals were to have Commonwealth citizenship (Art. 29). As such they might exercise privileges given to Commonwealth citizens in different Commonwealth countries. However, when a Federation national exercised rights in a Commonwealth country which that country conferred exclusively on its own citizens, he would lose his Federation nationality as if he were exercising rights in a foreign country. Rights conferred on Commonwealth citizens vary between Commonwealth countries; in Britain, Commonwealth citizens enjoy practically all the rights possessed by United Kingdom citizens. Persons from Commonwealth countries who might seek to become Federation nationals would receive no preference; they would have to renounce their present nationality and swear allegiance to the Federation of Malaya.

The draft constitution did not specify a review of Malay privileges. Moreover, responsibility for the maintenance of Malay privileges and "the legitimate interests of other communities" was given to the Paramount Ruler instead of to Parliament. Islam was declared the official religion although the Federation was to be a secular state (Art. 3), and freedom to worship and to proselytize was guaranteed except among the Malay community as might be forbidden by State law (Art. 11). The Reid recommendation that Chinese and Indian languages be permitted in Parliament for ten years was rejected (Art. 152). Amendment of the constitution was made more difficult (Art. 159), and early amendment was made unlikely by requiring that none be made except by a Parliament elected under the new constitution. The draft further provided that no elections be held before January 1, 1959, the present Legislative Council being allowed to continue until December 31, 1959 (Art. 164).

After some brave criticism by a Chinese member, the draft constitution was unanimously approved by the Federal Legislative Council on July 11. Royal assent was given to the British Parliament's "Federation of Malaya Independence Act, 1957" on July 31. On August 3, the Conference of Rulers elected the Ruler of Negri Sembilan, Tuanku Sir Abdul Rahman ibni Almarhum Tuanku Muhammad, to be *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*. The formal act creating the Federation of Malaya a sovereign state came on August 5 when an agreement was signed by representatives of the Queen and the Rulers. It declared that from August 31, 1957 the nine Malay States and two British Settlements would be formed into a federation of eleven states to be called *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* (Federation of Malaya).

One must conclude that the Reid Commission had the exceedingly difficult task of devising a workable parliamentary system for Malay's plural society. The Commission acquitted itself well; its recommendations were neat compromises which represented a rather natural evolutionary step in Malaya's constitutional development. The proposals were conservative and quite favorable to the Malays, but Chinese and Indian interests were not ignored. The citizenship proposals were not onerous, and non-Malays could look forward to a probable end to Malay privileges. As much non-Malay support as possible is vital for the successful working of the constitution, and the Reid recommendations would have come close to satisfying this requirement.

While non-Malays were critical of the Reid recommendations, the subsequent revisions were virtually unacceptable. The refusal of citizenship as a right to qualified foreign-born residents and leaving the granting of citizenship to the discretion of a government authority will cause grievous dissatisfaction. The number of non-Malays who fall into this category is unknown but thought to be large. The revision was probably believed necessary in order to maintain Malay preponderance and to deny citizenship to those suspected of subversive ties. A positive but hardly balancing factor was the inclusion of the Commonwealth citizenship provision. It should go far to allay the anxieties of those persons—predominantly non-Malays—who before August 31 were both British subjects and Federation citizens.¹⁷ Such persons now give their loyalty exclusively to the Federation, but their Commonwealth citizenship will permit them, like all other Federation nationals, to move to other Commonwealth countries.¹⁸

The major weakness of the constitution is that it holds little hope for the eventual attainment of equal rights for non-Malays. Rejection of the idea of a time limit on Malay privileges was a change of principle from that embodied in the Reid recommendation and suggests an admission by the Malays themselves that they will never be able to hold their own with non-Malays. In any event, without a time limit the Malays will be less inclined to try to compete with non-Malays. Provisions designed to safeguard Chinese and Indians against possible abuse of Malay privileges are probably inadequate (Arts. 80, 153). The constitution appears to assume a permanent

division of political and economic powers between the Malays and the Chinese. Such an assumption would be based on the unrealistic premises that the Malays will be able to provide a near perfect government which will not interfere in economic matters and that the majority of Chinese will never develop political aspirations.

To these criticisms, one may add that the constitution contains little which looks forward to the eventual abolition of the Malay Sultanates.¹⁹ While a single monarchy is probably well-suited to Malaya, considerable doubt can be expressed about the value of the nine State thrones. The Rulers have virtually no support among non-Malays and no wide support among the Malay people except as religious leaders and as shields against encroachments by non-Malays. The Rulers have thus far been no obstacle to constitutional development; the problem is rather that the Malay people may, for communal purposes, some day shelter behind these anachronistic symbols. But, admittedly, any provision which suggested eventual abolition of the Sultanates would hardly have gained Malay support for the constitution.

The revisions of the Reid recommendations were concessions to Malay opinion which probably place the whole constitution in jeopardy. They suggest anxiety about the possible increase in strength of Malay opposition parties at the expense of UMNO. One may also wonder if the British authorities did not mollify Malay conservatism in order to gain acceptance of Commonwealth citizenship. All in all, the constitution is indeed conservative. At the same time, it is an adroitly fashioned and subtly drawn document in which a wealth of British experience and skill has been brought to bear.

The British approach to the constitution was, of course, influenced by the considerations of a major power withdrawing from a strategic area which it has long dominated. Two criteria were desirable. First, the recipients of power should be friendly to Britain and to British economic interests. This was of particular importance because Malaya is a very important contributor to the sterling dollar pool as well as a good market for British manufactures. Between 1948 and 1955, rubber and tin exports earned approximately U.S. \$1.6 billion for the sterling area. The Federation's sterling balance in Britain probably exceeds U.S. \$650 million, and the Federation is a heavy investor in Commonwealth and British colonial government securities.²⁰ Secondly, the recipients should command popular support in order to maintain themselves in power. Therefore, as in the past except for the Malayan Union interlude, the British favored the Malays on the theory that they are the "sons of the soil" to whom the British had treaty obligations; they are also politically the most powerful community and they have been anti-Communist. The conservative Alliance, dominated numerically by the United Malays National Organization, fitted the criteria as well as they were ever likely to be met.²¹

Now that the transfer of power is completed, the political situation is filled with uncertainties. But one feature is clear: the Malays possess a more

powerful and sophisticated constitutional apparatus than any which they have had since the sixteenth century when the Malay empire fell to the Portuguese. Danger lies in the possibly widespread belief among Malays that they are now masters in their own house. Thanks to decades of British rule and the wealth of the Chinese, the Malays are not masters nor is the house solely a Malay one. The Malays might be wise to exercise restraint in the use of their power and not expect too many or too rapid changes in their economic and social position. Many non-Malays feel that such restraint will not be forthcoming. The UMNO leadership is moderate and appreciates the need to share some power with non-Malays; the crucial question is how Malay opposition leaders will conduct themselves.

Some observers believe that the continued existence of the Alliance is precarious now that independence has been achieved. Yet, the Alliance has already survived the public debate on the constitution, and independence was not its only *raison d'être*. Of equal or greater importance was the need for propertied Chinese to have political connections in order to protect their economic interests and also the need of the Malays to have financial assistance. This justification is still valid, although the need of the Malays is now less while that of the Chinese is greater. If the Alliance does stand, its member parties may lose such popular support as they possess to parties willing to exploit communal issues. The UMNO may have to choose between its Chinese allies and the continued support of the Malay community. As elections cannot be held until 1959, any early disintegration of the Alliance government will probably be averted, but should the Alliance split apart, no strong parties exist which can fill the void. Politics will not take definite shape until political leaders come to grips with issues.

The issues are numerous. The constitutional questions of citizenship, Malay privileges and language are unlikely to have been permanently settled. Nor probably is the question of national education policy. The issue of the Federation's relationship with Singapore is also a lively one: the Malays oppose incorporation of Singapore's million Chinese into the Federation and yet close cooperation seems mandatory; probably some kind of confederation is the ultimate solution. National economic policy will be a subject of debate. The Alliance policy of protection and relative freedom for capital has numerous critics. The Federation's foreign policies will also be controversial issues²² especially towards the Peoples' Republic of China, the South East Asia Treaty Organization, the Asian-African nations and the Middle Eastern Islamic countries.²³ Neutralist sentiment is not insignificant.

Most of these issues can be debated on communal or class lines. Communal parties already exist; others will probably appear, but united community support for any one party is unlikely. Of the parties making a class appeal, the Malayan Communist Party is far ahead in respect to organization, experience, discipline and program. The Labor Party and any other democratic socialist parties that may appear will have difficulty withstanding

Communist subversion on the one hand and possible government retaliation for Communist affiliations on the other. Communal parties based on class interests are a likelihood, and in the short run alliances of communal parties of the right and left are a probability. In the long run, however, the chief political forces may well be Malay communalism and Chinese Communism.

Now that independence has been attained, the Malayan Communist Party has a choice between caching its arms and halting terrorism and thus avoiding the stigma of opposing an independent Malayan government or continuing rebellion and seeking to discredit independence as false. It would prefer the former if a negotiated settlement and recognition could be obtained. Alliance Prime Minister Tengku Abdul Rahman flatly rejects a negotiated peace, but public opinion may have been influenced favorably by the agitation of labor and socialist groups for a peaceful settlement.²⁴ Whether or not the MCP drops its revolt, it will undoubtedly seek to intensify its efforts to subvert legal parties and undermine independence. In the short run, infiltration of liberal and left-wing organizations and alliances of left-wing parties is likely. But should the Communists conclude that a class appeal cannot overcome a communal appeal, a potential or actual opportunity for exploitation of communalism lies with the Chinese community.

If the conduct of Malay community leaders is a major factor in the months ahead, so also is the possible political activity of the Chinese. They have in the past been reluctant to enter Malayan politics; it remains to be seen whether they shall now take a more active interest. The reported rejuvenation of Chinese secret societies for communal protection suggests the degree of political sophistication of part of the Chinese community. At present, Chinese political representation is divided between the MCA (itself split into factions) and the Federation of Chinese Guilds and Associations. The MCA and the guilds have exchanged sharp words and the latter have been rather loosely and inappropriately charged with being Kuomintang-controlled. In any event, these differences are between rightist factions. The ability of either organization to attract the support of working-class Chinese, who are often China-oriented, can be seriously questioned. In this situation, the MCP can exploit Chinese nationalism and cultural pride and seek to supply the Chinese community with leadership against actually or allegedly overbearing Malay politicians. The Communists would, of course, lay the blame for communal discord on others. One may add that any large-scale or prolonged communal warfare would invite foreign intervention. Sooner or later, Malaya may become a subject of controversy among Asian nations.

To avoid concluding these speculations on a pessimistic note, certain positive factors should be mentioned. The Federation of Malaya enjoys a prosperous economy and many people have a comparatively high standard of material well-being. The country has a high proportion of well-educated and experienced persons in many fields, and in the past common sense and a spirit of tolerance have been characteristic of all communities. Malayan

leaders have told the people that independence will not mean deliverance from economic grievances, hard work or responsibility. About one thousand British civil servants are being retained in important positions. The powerful police and military forces are non-political, although Malays predominate. Finally, Commonwealth nations in Asia, particularly India, can be counted on to take a strong interest in Malaya's future.

Whatever does happen, the first twelve to eighteen months of independence are certain to be crucial especially in respect to establishing attitudes between the communities and towards the government. Developments in communal relations during these early months may well determine the success or failure of independence. Friends of the new nation hope that acts will not occur to make unity impossible and thereby destroy hopes for making some form of parliamentary government workable. The delaying of elections is a steadying factor. One may also hope that independent Malaya will remain prosperous and that political freedom will soon be accompanied by some tangible economic and social achievements.

Notes

- 1 Political and constitutional developments in the Crown Colony of Singapore have occurred largely independently of the Federation. Singapore is to obtain self-rule in 1958.
- 2 Decentralization of governmental power was undertaken in the four Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang where in effect direct rule prevailed and where enterprise was most developed. The best discussion of decentralization and union of the Malay States is in Rupert Emerson's *Malaysia. A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*, New York, 1937, pp. 343 ff.
- 3 See Great Britain, *Malayan Union and Singapore. Statement of Policy on Future Constitution*, Cmd. 6724, London, 1946, and *Malayan Union and Singapore. Summary of Proposed Constitutional Arrangements*, Cmd. 6749, London, 1946.
- 4 Estimated population of the Federation of Malaya on December 31, 1956 was 3.1 million Malays, 2.4 million Chinese and some 800,000 Indians. A new census is being taken this year.
- 5 Federation of Malaya, *The Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948*, Kuala Lumpur, (reprint) 1952.
- 6 The present Malayan government aims at less of an exchange of strengths and more of a direct effort to promote the development of a Malay entrepreneurial class. A special committee within the Ministry for Commerce and Industry seeks to promote Malay participation in business at the executive level. With government assistance, a Malay bank, the only one of its kind, is being planned. Several similar projects are afoot.
- 7 Malay, Chinese and Indian are ethnic terms; "Malayan" means anyone who makes his home in Malaya.
- 8 In the first Federal elections in July 1955, the Alliance won 51 of 52 popularly elected seats in a 98 member Legislative Council. The chief qualification to vote was Federal citizenship. Registration was voluntary. An estimated 1.6 million persons were eligible to register and 1.25 million persons, of whom 85 percent were Malays, did register. Voter turnout was heavy, more than a million votes being cast. For a discussion of the elections, see Francis Carnell, "The Malayan Elec-

- tions." *Pacific Affairs*, December 1955, pp. 315-330. Additional commentary can be found in Irene Tinker, "Malayan Elections: Electoral Pattern for Plural Societies," *Western Political Quarterly*, June 1956, pp. 258-282.
- 9 For a discussion of Malayan trade unions and labor politics, see the author's "Trade Unions in Malaya," *The Annals*, March 1957, pp. 142-150.
 - 10 Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Conference held in London in January and February, 1956*, Kuala Lumpur, 1956. Also published as Cmd. 9714, London, 1956.
 - 11 The members were the Right Honorable Lord Reid and Sir Ivor Jennings from Britain, Sir William McKell from Australia, Mr. B. Malik from India and Mr. Justice Abdul Hamid from Pakistan. A Canadian was also appointed but withdrew for reasons of health and was not replaced.
 - 12 Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission 1957*, Colonial No. 330, London, 1957.
 - 13 Although not a constitutional question, the issue of national education policy was closely associated with the debate on the constitution. The subject has been warmly argued since 1950. Broadly stated, British authorities supported by most Malay leaders have favored the gradual creation of a system of national schools with a common curriculum in which the chief medium of instruction would be Malay or English. Since all children would eventually be required to attend the national schools full-time, Chinese and Indian private schools in which the majority of Chinese and Indian children are now educated would ultimately have to disappear. The Chinese have declared that national schools will destroy their culture and argue that political loyalty and cultural autonomy are not incompatible. Over Chinese opposition, a national school program was enacted into law by the Alliance government in February of this year. It is known as the Razak plan after the Minister of Education, Dato' Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussain, a high UMNO official. The latest pertinent document is Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Education Committee 1956*, Kuala Lumpur, 1956.
 - 14 Since late 1955, the UMNO has sought to draw Malays and Indonesians closer together through cultural and business contacts. Some Chinese believe that the British have encouraged these Malay activities—not that much encouragement was needed—in order to leave behind them a kind of "divide and rule" legacy. Most Malay-Indonesian cultural activities are centered in the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, the Malay Language and Literary Congress.
 - 15 The Pakistani member of the Commission submitted dissenting opinions in regard to citizenship, privileges, and Islam as the state religion. His views more closely followed the Alliance memorandum and were more favorable to the Malays. For a detailed commentary on the Reid proposals and public reaction thereto, see Frank H. H. King, *The New Malayan Nation*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1957, pp. 10-35.
 - 16 Great Britain, *Constitutional Proposals for the Federation of Malaya*, Cmnd. 210, London, 1957.
 - 17 British subjects born in Malaya who had not taken up Federation citizenship prior to August 31 are permitted until August 31, 1958 to become Federation nationals on the same terms as applied to them before independence day (Art. 170).
 - 18 Subject to immigration laws of particular Commonwealth countries.
 - 19 It should be noted, however, that the term "Malay States" is deleted from the constitution; the States are to be referred to simply as "States" (Art. 1).
 - 20 United Kingdom authorities are not very explicit on this subject. The \$1.6 billion figure is the difference between Pan-Malayan (includes Singapore) imports and exports to dollar countries. Federation of Malaya, *Annual Report 1955*, p. 125.

- The sterling balance figure includes balances of British Borneo dependencies and is based on information dated 1953 quoted in Judd Polk: *Sterling, Its Meaning in World Finance*, New York, 1956, pp. 201-202.
- 21 The Alliance government has kept the Federation in the Commonwealth (the tenth fully independent member) and in the sterling area.
 - 22 The Federation's application for United Nations membership was approved by the Security Council on September 5 and the General Assembly voted the Federation to be the 82nd member of the United Nations on September 17. The Federation's chief delegate to the U. N. and the first ambassador to the United States is the distinguished Dr. Ismail bin Dato'Abdul Rahman, former Minister of Commerce and Industry and vice-president of the UMNO.
 - 23 In January of this year, Alliance leaders negotiated a defense agreement with Britain (published on September 19 as a British White Paper). The agreement provides for the close cooperation and joint action of Britain and the Federation in case of attack on the Federation or on remaining British dependencies in the area or in case of a threat to peace in the area. It permits British and Commonwealth forces to be maintained in the Federation in return for which Britain will continue to train Federation armed forces and give certain financial help which indirectly will assist the Federation's five-year economic development plan. British and Commonwealth forces will not, however, be permitted to use Federation bases to meet SEATO obligations without the approval of the Federation government. The agreement was debated in the federal legislature early in October. Alliance opponents have been critical of it.
 - 24 According to newspaper reports, the Peoples' Republic of China has agreed to recognize the Federation. Earlier, the press in China had belittled the Federation's independence. On September 3, the Alliance government offered the MCP an amnesty prior to starting a final drive aimed at bringing the Emergency to an end by the end of 1958, but the offer was later rejected.

MALAYA—THE NEW NATION

Sir Donald MacGillivray

Source: *International Affairs* 34(2) (1958): 157-63.

When I last came to Chatham House to talk about Malaya, in 1954, the spotlight had already turned away from the Emergency in Malaya and was beginning to focus on the political developments, which had begun to stir just as soon as confidence had been restored in the country's future following the great improvement in conditions of internal security brought about under Sir Gerald Templer's dynamic leadership in 1952 and 1953. (When I speak of Malaya in this talk I refer to the Federation of Malaya and not also to Singapore.) The question being asked at the time of my previous talk was 'When is Malaya likely to attain independence?' No one could then even hazard a guess, and yet only a year later it had become fairly clear that independence would be brought about in 1957. During that intervening year, a momentous year for Malaya as it proved, the General Elections of July 1955 had taken place. The party which formed an alliance of the three great community organizations—the United Malays Nationalist Organisation, the Malayan Chinese Association, and the Malayan Indian Congress—swept the boards, an event which profoundly affected the whole future timing of independence. Today, only just over two years from the date of those elections, the date of Independence has already been recorded for history.

Questions which I am now often asked are: 'Was this timing right?', 'Was Malaya really ripe for Independence?', 'Will economic and social progress be maintained?', 'Will Malaya adhere to parliamentary democracy and successfully withstand Communism?'

Time alone will give the full answers to these questions, but in my own assessment the answer is undoubtedly yes to all four of them, and I don't suppose Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would have been prepared to agree to Independence at this time unless it also had been of that opinion. Since these questions have been put to me often in the last two months, especially in Canada where I found a keen public interest in

Malaya, I thought I might try today to give some indication of the grounds of my confidence that the answer in each case is yes.

It is certainly true that in the concluding stages Independence came extremely quickly—in fact just as quickly as was practicable, having regard to the numerous and complex constitutional and administrative arrangements that had to be made if the transition was to be an orderly and planned one. But although it came quickly it was not, I believe, too soon or before the country was ready for it. On the contrary, I am sure that grave risks would have been taken if it had been delayed, risks far greater than those which were involved by going forward boldly and bravely and briskly towards the goal that all had agreed upon as soon as conditions were ripe. Indeed, delay might well have gravely jeopardized the future good relations between Great Britain and this new tenth member of the British Commonwealth.

The risks of delay lay fundamentally in the strong, passionate desire for Independence which had developed among Malayan political bodies and also, I believe, among the great majority of educated people in Malaya as soon as the militant effort of the Malayan Communist Party no longer threatened their existence. There was undoubtedly strong nationalist feeling, especially among the Malays. I have heard it said, indeed it was reported in parts of the British press, that very little fervour and enthusiasm for Independence was expressed by the average man in the street at the Independence celebrations last August and that this indicated an apathy on the part of the public towards Independence. I do not think that that was a correct interpretation of the quiet undemonstrative manner with which the people of Malaya greeted Independence, and it should be remembered that Asians are not, generally speaking, nearly as demonstrative in such matters as Western peoples can be. It is true that certain sections of the community, notably among the Chinese, had for some time been apprehensive as to what their own positions might be once the British authority had been withdrawn—whether they would get a square deal from an independent government the dominating influence in which would clearly be Malay. There were others who were apprehensive of racial conflict if British authority was not there to keep the peace. These apprehensions had, however, to a great extent been allayed by the time Independence came, and there can be no doubt in my mind that even among those who harboured such fears the desire for Independence had become very strong.

One can readily understand this when one remembers that since the end of the second World War, with the exception of British Borneo, all the other previously dependent countries of South East Asia had become independent—India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia, even the states of Indo-China. Malaya remained an island of colonialism, so to speak, in a great sea of new nations, proud of their newly won independent status. Malayans, when they went to international conferences, especially the regional conferences of bodies such as F.A.O., E.C.A.F.E., Unesco, and the

Colombo Plan, found themselves there as observers or advisers to a British delegation, whereas the representatives of these neighbouring countries sat around the conference table in their own right, themselves speaking for their own countries. And yet the Malaysians were very well aware that the standards of living and of economic and social development were higher in Malaya than anywhere else in South East Asia and that they themselves had far more to contribute to the conferences than these representatives of their neighbours and were able to make such contributions in just as competent a manner. Naturally the dependent status irked and it would from that point of view—the point of view of national pride—have been a grave mistake to have protracted that status longer than was absolutely necessary on other grounds.

But, of course, nationalist feeling, however strong, is not in itself sufficient ground for early independence. Certain other conditions must be satisfied before a new nation can be strong enough to stand on its own. And in a multi-racial country these conditions are more exacting than elsewhere. I know that some outside observers have felt that the demand for independence came so quickly and was so quickly met that the country could not possibly have been prepared to carry the new responsibilities that independence brings.

It must be remembered, however, that Independence was not a sudden policy squeezed out from a reluctant Great Britain by the pressure of local or world opinion. It was a natural and deliberately chosen policy and for many years preparations had steadily been made for it, despite the preoccupations of the Emergency. When, ten years ago, a new agreement was made between Her Majesty the Queen and the Rulers of the Malay States, thus providing a post-war Constitution for the country, this policy was enshrined in the preamble; it was there stated that as a first step elections would be held to the several legislatures as soon as circumstances permitted. Unfortunately, or from some points of view, I think, fortunately, the rebellion of the Malayan Communist Party broke out a few months later and it was not possible to proceed with those elections for some time. I myself have little doubt that had it not been for this rebellion nationalist pressure would have developed very much earlier and independence might have come before the country was ripe for it. From that point of view the Emergency was a blessing in disguise. In the years from 1948 to 1953 all attention was focused on the defeat of Communist terrorism, and the threat of a common enemy did more than anything else to bring the communities together and to make them work in unison in a common all-important effort. Moreover, it gave time for the reconstruction of the country following the Japanese occupation and for measures to be taken to prepare the way for self-government. I might mention some of these.

Over seven years ago Sir Henry Gurney instituted what was known as 'the membership system', whereby Malaysians, not only Malays (who had long

held responsible executive positions in the Governments of the Malay States by virtue of the Constitutions of these States) but Chinese and Indians as well, were given responsible positions in the Federal Government. In 1952 elected councils were established in small towns and villages for the administration of local affairs, and thus there are now many hundreds of people who already have some years' experience in local self-government. The Government Information Services were greatly expanded, effort being concentrated on explanations of democratic forms of government, how the government of the country worked, what it did for the people, and just how the people could themselves participate in it. There were over a hundred public-speaker units, equipped with documentary films of the Malaya Film Unit and other visual aids, constantly touring the *kampongs* and villages by road or by river.

Civics courses were organized for the same purpose and people of every class and race were encouraged to attend them. One of my most happy memories of Malaya will be these civics courses. The average duration of a course was a week, and if it were possible at least one day was spent in Kuala Lumpur in order that visits might be paid to Federal institutions such as the Legislative Council. At the end of the day they would come to King's House for half an hour to meet the High Commissioner, to learn from him what he stood for, why he flew two flags at the end of his lawn—the Union Jack and the Federation flag—and to have the opportunity of asking him questions. In the last months before Independence one of the most difficult questions I had to answer was why it was that there would still have to be a British High Commissioner in Malaya after Independence. This, incidentally, is the only country where there was a British High Commissioner both before Independence and afterwards, and it was not always easy to get it across that, although the title had to be the same, the functions would be entirely different.

But that is a digression. I was mentioning some of the measures taken to prepare the country for Independence. The need to foster in every possible way a loyalty to Malaya, especially through the curriculum of the schools, was constantly in mind. For example, the maps on the walls were predominantly those of Malaya rather than those of China or of India; and the flags that were raised outside the school each morning were those of the Federation and of the Ruler in whose State the school was situated and to whom the children owed allegiance.

Nevertheless, however advanced preparations such as these might be, there were still major obstacles in the way of Independence, and when Field Marshal Templer was appointed High Commissioner in 1952 he was given a directive which, while reiterating the objective of a strong, united, self-governing Malayan nation, declared that Her Majesty's Government would not lay down its responsibilities in Malaya until satisfied that Communist terrorism had been defeated and that that partnership of all communities

which alone can lead to true and stable self-government had been firmly established.

Here then were two essential conditions. No one, I think, could have any doubt today about the fulfilment of the first of these, the defeat of Communist terrorism. It is true that the terrorists have not been completely eradicated. There are still some 1,700 of them, as compared with 8,000 at the peak of their effort; but they are inactive and a diminishing force. There were less than 200 terrorist incidents in 1957 as compared with 3,800 in 1952. Moreover, they no longer have anything like the same degree of sympathy and support from the public as they had at one time from large sections of the Chinese, and they cannot possibly any longer sustain the pretence that they are a liberating army liberating Malaya from a foreign yoke. The newly independent Malayan Government has expressed its determination to keep up the pressure against the Communist terrorists until they either surrender or are wiped out. Meanwhile they remain a costly nuisance (the cost of the Emergency to the Federation Government alone runs at about £16 million a year), but no one can doubt that the militant effort of the Malayan Communist Party has already been defeated and the Party would like to call it off on their own terms if they could. In fact, it is now nearly two years since I was authorized by H.M.G. to make a public statement to the effect that at its greatly reduced level the Emergency no longer constituted a barrier to Independence.

The other major requirement of Independence was a sufficient partnership of all communities. (May I remind you of the population make-up of the Federation? Forty-nine per cent are Malays, 38 per cent Chinese, 12 per cent Indians, Pakistanis, and Singalese: peoples of different religions, different languages—peoples as different in these respects as the Arabs in Palestine were from the Jews. No country with such a population could hope to hold together and go forward prosperously and peacefully as an independent nation, especially in the face of constant Communist subversive effort to disrupt lawfully established government, unless there had developed a sufficient degree of common loyalty, of harmony of outlook, and unity of purpose.) That such harmony and unity do exist was demonstrated in large part, on the political level, by the General Elections held in 1955 on the basis of universal adult suffrage for all citizens of Malaya. Not only were the elections won overwhelmingly (51 out of 52 seats) by the alliance of the three big community organizations, but it could be shown that Malays and Indians had voted for Chinese, Chinese and Indians for Malays, and so on, and that, in constituencies where the great majority of the electorate was Malay, Chinese candidates could be returned. Moreover, this same Alliance Party had in the previous year won almost every seat in the State and Settlement Councils and at the local government level as well. The Alliance could, therefore, claim with considerable justification that the partnership of races which H.M.G. had demanded as a prerequisite to Independence had been

sufficiently established. Moreover, it was clear from many other signs that there was increasing harmony between the races. As I mentioned just now, the Emergency itself was in part responsible for this. Good Citizen Committees were formed in many towns and villages in order to educate the public in regard to the true objective of the Communists and in regard to the need for inter-racial co-operation at all times. These committees have done much to foster loyalty to Malaya and to unite the people of the various races. In other ways also there has been increased co-operation. Men and women of every community have worked together in State and District War Executive Committees, in Town and Local Councils, and in voluntary organizations such as the Girl Guides, the Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, and the St John Ambulance Brigade. Of course, there will always be different community points of view on many subjects, just as in the same way there will always be different points of view on some subjects between the English and the Scots. But at least there seemed to have developed in Malaya a common Malayan outlook generally on the part of the great majority of the people, and a national consciousness to a degree sufficient to ensure that the people would hold together as a nation.

Since, then, there was a Government which represented all the communities and had public support at every level to an overwhelming degree, and since the members of this Government believed most strongly in the country's motto 'Unity is Strength' and recognized the vital importance of racial harmony to their very existence as a nation, the best moment for Independence seemed to be when this Government was in office and still strong. Moreover, it is a Government that believes firmly in parliamentary democracy and is fully conscious of the real dangers of Communist subversion, especially in the schools and among the youth organizations. It is also aware that the Malayan Communist Party's only hope of achieving its objective of domination of the country is to create racial discord, thereby shattering this Government.

With such a Government in office, a Government led by men of great sincerity and honesty of purpose, the stage seemed to be set for advance to the goal of Independence at the quickest possible pace consistent with stable transition. It was, however, essential first to secure a sound Constitution which the public of all communities would accept and which would, while safeguarding existing interests, give opportunities to all communities to play a part in the development and government of the country. This was achieved by the appointment of a Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Reid which spent some months in the country during 1956 and reported in February 1957. The report was very well received by all communities in the Federation; there were criticisms of parts of it here and there, but generally it was regarded as providing for a very fair Constitution affording the safeguards that were looked for. The Commission's Report was then considered by a body representative of the Alliance Federal Government and of the

Conference of Rulers and the Governments of the Malay States. After a final conference with H.M.G. in London last May a Constitution was worked out which was accepted by all these parties and finally endorsed by the Federal Legislative Council and by the legislatures of each State and Settlement. I believe that the minorities recognized that this Constitution contains the safeguards and fundamental rights they were looking for, and the fears that previously existed, especially among the Chinese, that they would not have their place in the government of the country were further dispelled by the appointment of Chinese to important executive positions—in the Federal Cabinet and as Governor of Malacca and Chief Minister of Penang.

The Constitution also preserved the position of the Rulers as constitutional sovereigns in their own States and provided for the selection of one of them as Paramount Ruler of the whole Federation—thus creating a second monarchy in a Commonwealth which already has two Republics and demonstrating once again the flexible nature of this Commonwealth. The retention of the Rulers' position undoubtedly gave great satisfaction in Malaya, especially to the Malays, for it would be wrong to imagine that there is not a great loyalty among Malaysians towards the Rulers, a loyalty which is undoubtedly one of the great forces of Malayan unity and a stabilizing factor and bulwark against Communism.

This Alliance Government has today, I believe, the same strong support throughout the country as it had at the time of the elections. It has, in addition, the achievement of Independence to its credit. It is encouraging to know that it recognizes that if Communist attempts at domination are to be resisted (and terrorism having failed, the terrorists will certainly continue to attempt to achieve their object by subversion) there must be continuing development and prosperity and that for the achievement of this capital investment from overseas is essential. This Alliance Government has indicated time and again that it wishes to encourage such investment.

It is also a happy thing that the Malaysians are glad to remain within the Commonwealth and, although their first loyalty is naturally to their own new Sovereign Head of State, they recognize Her Majesty the Queen as Head of the Commonwealth and their sentiments towards the British Crown are those of warm affection. This, indeed, was demonstrated fully by the enthusiastic reception given to His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh in November 1956 and also by the universal desire to have a member of the Royal Family personally representing Her Majesty at the Independence Celebrations. I believe that the Federation of Malaya as an independent country is a new source of strength to the Commonwealth.

SINGAPORE

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Lennox A. Mills

Source: Lennox A. Mills, *Malaya: A Political and Economic Appraisal*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, and London: Oxford University Press (1958), pp. 117-45.

The division of Malaya

Singapore was the joint creation of British and Chinese. It was their enterprise which transformed a minor depot of Malay piracy into the principal trading center of South East Asia. From the date of its foundation in 1819 the Malays contributed little to its population or its economic development, and most of the inhabitants were always Chinese. In 1954 they were 893,000 or 76.4 per cent of its population of 1,168,000; only 12.3 per cent were Malays. This was the main reason why the island was excluded from the Malayan Union and later the Federation of Malaya. In the peninsula the Malays were 49 per cent of the population and the Chinese 37.6 per cent, but if Singapore were joined to it the Malays would be only 43 per cent of the population of Malaya and the Chinese 43.9 per cent. The second reason for the division was economic. Apart from the smelting of tin, manufacturing in Singapore was of minor importance compared with commerce. The city grew rich as the focal point of the transit trade of South East Asia. To promote its growth as an entrepôt Singapore levied no import or export duties from the date of its foundation. The merchants of Singapore were well aware of the vital importance of free trade and were unalterably opposed to any interference with it. On the other hand the Federation was an exporter of raw materials and a market for overseas manufactures, and had no entrepôt trade to foster. It obtained three fifths of its revenue from import and export duties, and was as determined not to adopt free trade as Singapore was to maintain it.

These two reasons, and especially the first, outweighed the strong arguments for putting the whole of Malaya under a single government: the population was made up of the same racial elements, there were obvious advantages in unified government services for so small a country, and many

of the problems were similar. Each for instance had to cope with the Communist threat and each had to reconcile the same antagonistic communities and create a common local loyalty. Economically they were to a considerable extent interdependent. Singapore handled the bulk of the imports and exports of the Federation, and found in it one of its principal markets. This dependence increased after World War II, since the transit trade declined in importance owing to the growth of economic nationalism in South East Asia. Indonesia, for example, hampered transit trade in the hope of developing its own processing of rubber and its own seaports.

The development of self-government

British postwar policy as in the rest of Malaya was the progressive development of self-government, the first step being taken in 1946. The governor was assisted by an executive and a legislative council, the former of which consisted of seven official and four unofficial members appointed by him. The legislative council was made up of the governor as chairman, nine officials, and thirteen unofficial members of whom nine were elected. The significant changes were that the legislative council had an unofficial instead of the prewar official majority, and that part of the members were elected. Four unofficials were nominated by the governor to represent any important group which failed to win a seat in the election. Three of the nine elected members were chosen by the three chambers of commerce, European, Chinese, and Indian. The remaining six were directly elected, the vote being given to all British subjects, male and female, over twenty-one. No property or literacy qualifications were required, and to aid the large number of illiterate voters each candidate used a symbol such as a telephone, a football player, or a bottle of beer, which was printed alongside his name on the ballot. In 1948 the municipal government of the city of Singapore was altered. Its twenty-five commissioners nominated by the governor were changed to nine nominated and eighteen elected commissioners. The president continued to be a member of the Malay civil service. Subsequently this arrangement was replaced by an entirely elected council.

In 1950 two more unofficial members were added to the executive council, making six in all, and the membership of the legislative council was changed to ten official and sixteen unofficial members, of whom twelve were elected and four nominated by the governor. The two new unofficials in the executive council were elected from among themselves by the sixteen unofficials of the legislative council, in order to link the councils more closely together. The two who were elected in 1951 were the leader and another member of the majority party in the legislative council. The governor of Singapore also promised that when the six unofficials in the executive council were unanimous he would not use his legal power to overrule them, except on matters where he was required to do so by his instructions from the British

government. To summarize the changes which had taken place since the war, in both of the colony's councils the power and the training of the unofficials were being gradually extended in the legislative and executive fields.

Apprenticeship in democratic government presumed interest on the part of the voters, and here the results were disappointing. Of the adult population of Singapore nearly 300,000, largely Chinese, were alien immigrants and therefore did not have the franchise. The potential electorate of British subjects was believed to be around a quarter of a million, of whom most were Chinese. For the first election the number who registered was 22,395, nearly half of them Indians, and of these 63 per cent voted. In the second election of 1951, 48,155 registered and 51 per cent voted, a large proportion again being Indians. It will be recalled that the experience in the Federation was similar, and that in the election of 1955 it was estimated that only 23 per cent of the Chinese citizens registered and not all of them voted. The explanation would seem to lie in the apathy of a large part of the Chinese electorate, and its unwillingness to take part in public affairs. The encouraging feature was that neither of the two principal parties, the Progressives (or conservatives) and the Labor party, was communal.

The Rendel report

In July 1953 the government appointed the Rendel commission to review the constitution, with special reference to the poor response of the voters, an increase in the number of elected members, and the relation between the governments of the colony and of the city of Singapore. The commission was made up of three Europeans, three Chinese, one Indian, and one Malay, under the chairmanship of Sir George Rendel. Its report, published in February 1954, was accepted by the government and was a sweeping advance towards popular control of internal affairs.¹ The commission decided that the existing system of voluntary registration of voters had failed, only a minority having registered out of those who were qualified. Since they would not take the trouble to register, the most hopeful way of persuading them to vote was to put their names on the register automatically. The commission rejected the demand of the alien Chinese that a special Singapore citizenship be created for them which would give them the vote without requiring them to become naturalized as British subjects and swear exclusive allegiance to the British crown. They were told that it was impossible for them to acquire the privileges of citizenship and at the same time retain their allegiance to China.

The commission recommended that the membership of the legislative assembly be increased to thirty-two of whom twenty-five would be elected. Of the remainder three would be officials and four unofficials nominated by the governor. This last group would give "adequate opportunity for the representation and defence of the views of any significant minority group whose

interests might be in danger of being overlooked." The existing system whereby three members were elected by the three chambers of commerce would be discontinued. The term of office of the legislative assembly would be four years. The executive council would be replaced by a council of ministers, composed of the governor and nine ministers, of whom three were to be officials and six members of the majority party in the assembly. The three officials would be the financial secretary, the attorney general, and the chief secretary. They would be responsible to the governor, not the assembly, and would control finance, foreign affairs, defense, and internal security including the police. Other departments of the executive would be in charge of the six unofficial ministers. After each election the leader of the largest party in the assembly would become the chief minister, and as such exercise many of the functions which would normally devolve on a prime minister in a fully self-governing state. He would nominate six members of the assembly including himself, whom the governor would appoint as ministers. The council of ministers would be responsible collectively for all ministerial decisions, and would hold office as long as they retained the support of the majority in the assembly. The council of ministers "would become the chief policy making body. It would be responsible not only for determination of policy in all matters other than those relating to external affairs, internal security and defence but also for deciding what legislation to introduce into the Assembly, for all major executive decisions, and in fact for all duties normally performed by the Cabinet in a fully self-governing State." Even for the subjects controlled by the governor the elected ministers could make proposals which would carry considerable weight.

The Rendel commission's proposals for the executive council were based on the principle of dyarchy together with a modification of the cabinet system adapted to a transitional type of government. Successful operation of the scheme would require a high degree of cooperation and willingness to compromise on the part of the two sets of ministers and the governor. Apart from the latter's control of defense and other reserved subjects, he would be obliged on almost all questions to accept the decisions of the council of ministers. He could withhold assent to bills passed by the assembly, and he would have the right to legislate by decree. If the assembly refused to pass a bill the governor could enact it if he considered it essential. Before doing so, however, he should consult his ministers. These powers were "designed to meet exceptional circumstances," and were to be used as seldom as possible. During this difficult period of transition towards independence the test of a successful governor would be whether he could persuade his ministers not to adopt a policy which would compel him to use his emergency powers. He would need the qualities of a diplomatist rather than those of an administrator.

The Rendel commission estimated that out of a population of 1,120,000, 282,000 were qualified to vote. Of these 156,000 were Chinese, 51,000

Indians, and 50,000 Malays. In addition there were 578,000 residents under twenty-one, 82 per cent of them Chinese, most of whom had been locally born and were potential voters. Out of the total number of voters only 83,000 were literate in English while the remainder, including 70 per cent of the Chinese voters, were not. This point was important since English was the official language of the assembly, and all candidates must be able to read and speak it with sufficient fluency to take an active part in its proceedings. The Rendel commission defended its refusal to make Chinese an official language on the ground that English was the only medium of communication of the multiracial population of Singapore. If moreover the demand of the Chinese were granted it would be impossible to refuse the same status to Tamil and Malay. This would mean that every speech would have to be given four times, and legislative proceedings would be "greatly lengthened."

The election of 1955

The new constitution came into effect in February 1955, and the election was held in April. Six parties and a number of independents took part. All of them had limited membership and were poorly organized. The oldest party, the Progressives, had been founded in 1947 and won a majority of the elected seats in the election of 1951. It was noncommunal and included quite a few Europeans, although its leaders and probably the majority of its 5000 registered members were Straits Chinese. It was the most conservative of the six parties, and supported the British policy of gradual development of self-government. There was a widespread belief that the Progressives would win the election. This expectation was disappointed, in part at least because of the formation of the Democratic party about two months before the election. This was a communal Chinese party, and was the creation of the wealthy businessmen whose stronghold was the Chinese chamber of commerce. Traditionally they had been the accepted leaders of their community, and many believed that their influence would cause the Democrats to win. What they succeeded in doing was to split the conservative vote, and thus make a notable contribution to the unexpected victory of the Labor Front.

The Labor Front was not a united party but a loose union of small groups, most of them socialists without much organization. It had the support of one large section of organized labor, the Trade Union Congress with some 30,000 members. Its leader, Lim Yew-hock, was a prominent member of the Labor Front. The party platform was designed to appeal to those who wanted change. It strongly condemned British colonial government, and advocated rapid advance towards complete independence. It bound itself to end the Emergency Regulations under which since 1948 the government had had the power to imprison Communists without trial. (Incidentally when the party won the election it found the Communist danger was so serious that it was compelled to retain these regulations.) The Labor Front also promised

expanded social services, the creation of a welfare state, the rapid substitution of Malaysians for Europeans in senior civil service positions, and multi-lingualism in the assembly. The leader of the party, David Marshall, was the son of an Iraqi Jew who had been born in Singapore and become a prominent lawyer. An eloquent and effective speaker of the emotional type, he was an important asset to his party. During the campaign he ignored the fact that in ten years British colonial rule had largely abolished itself, and that progress towards self-government had apparently been in advance of any widespread demand for it. His favorite role was St. George slaying the dragon of British colonialism, and giving "hope and sustenance to the frustrated and dispossessed majority of the people of this island." Under his leadership they would cease to be "worker ants" and laborers "thrown on the slagheap of our gold mining town."²

The most radical of the parties was the People's Action party (P.A.P.). Its principal leaders were a group of Straits Chinese and Indians, including several who at one time or another had been imprisoned under the Emergency Regulations. The party was better organized than the others, and was composed in part of Communists and fellow travelers, and partly of more moderate leftists. The main strength of P.A.P. lay in two groups of Chinese who had been organized by the Communists. One was composed of the students in the Chinese private schools, and the other was a group of unions with about 30,000 members which were independent of the Trade Union Congress. The leader of P.A.P., Lee Kuan-yew, was a Straits Chinese lawyer who had been educated at Cambridge. While denying that he was a Communist he admitted that "Any man in Singapore who wants to carry the Chinese-speaking people with him cannot afford to be anti-Communist. The Chinese are very proud of China."³ Two minor parties which also put up candidates were the Labor party and the Malay Union Alliance, a coalition of U.M.N.O. and M.C.A. These parties which dominated politics in the Federation had only a limited following in Singapore.

The election took place on April, 2, and 158,154 or 53 per cent of the electorate voted. The Labor Front received 55,457 votes, or 27 per cent, and won ten seats. The Progressives with 38,695 votes obtained four seats, the Democrats with 32,115 votes two, P.A.P. with 13,634 votes three, the Alliance three, and independents three. Marshall formed a coalition with the Malay Union Alliance, and the governor used his right of nomination to give him two additional members in the legislative assembly. Marshall could also rely on the support of the three officials. This gave his government a majority of eighteen out of thirty-two members. The Progressives, Democrats, and P.A.P. formed the opposition, and later the two first combined in a single party, the Liberal Socialists. The principal opposition came from P.A.P., which set out to discredit Marshall's government and increase its popular support through militant action. If it could give the impression that it was a more earnest champion of the workmen than the government, it could hope to weaken the

Labor Front's support by winning over some of its trade unions. It might also draw into the ranks of P.A.P. the unions which as yet had not joined either party.

In addition to strengthening its party organization P.A.P. immediately engineered a series of strikes and student demonstrations which sometimes ended in violence. The Communists, who with the fellow travelers were estimated by Marshall to number about 3000,⁴ played an important though covert role in these actions. Organized bands of Chinese high school students were prominent in the disturbances. A strike by the employees of a Chinese bus company was perverted into a mass demonstration whipped up by agitators. For several days emotional "indignation meetings" were held by workmen and students, who deliberately fomented hostility towards the police. Violence broke out May 12 when hit and run attacks were made on the police and mobs roamed the streets. There was "a night of confused fighting" and organized defiance of law and order. The police tried to avoid using their firearms but were finally compelled to shoot. Two policemen, one student, and one American newsman were killed, and many others injured. The *Straits Times* wrote that "In the events of this week we have an outright, determined challenge to law, order and peace thrown down by the strikers, backed by a large and highly disciplined body of students, under the central direction of elements whose purpose is to disrupt and destroy. Their aim is chaos, their ambition absolute power." On May 13 Marshall closed the two largest Chinese schools, from which the majority of rioting students had come. He ordered the committees managing them to expel the ringleaders and restore discipline. A member of the government told the assembly that the students were largely responsible for the riots. "The situation in these Chinese middle schools is the most serious problem that faces Singapore." Thereupon 4000 teenagers took over control of the schools for a week, locking themselves in and defying the government until Marshall surrendered under pressure. He excused himself by saying that "Our son is as one who is ill. This is not the time for the whip and the knife." He countermanded all his orders, and the students continued their extracurricular activities with gusto for another year. In June the leaders of the trade unions supporting P.A.P. decided to use a strike among the employees of the harbor board as an excuse for a general strike against the government. There were the usual reports of intimidation of workmen to compel them to take part. Marshall ordered the arrest of some of the leaders under the Emergency Regulations since they were attempting "openly to coerce the government." The order to strike was only partially obeyed, and after several days the leaders ordered their men to return to work. They had, however, shown the dangerous hold which they had built up over a considerable part of the Singapore trade unionists.

The Rendel constitution under fire

When the Rendel commission devised its new constitution it intended that there should be no further change for some years, while the population of Singapore gained experience in the working of parliamentary democracy. "There should be a transition period during which autonomous institutions and political experience can be developed. The length of this period will depend partly on how effective and efficient the new constitution proves to be in practice." This expectation was not fulfilled because of two factors, nationalist impatience with anything less than complete self-government and the personality of Marshall. The independent London *Observer* summed up one phase of his character when it remarked that his great success as a criminal lawyer was "largely because he was able to convince himself to the last lump in the throat of his clients' innocence." The same habit of mind carried over into his political career, and he had no difficulty in persuading himself that he was the champion of freedom in mortal combat with the hosts of darkness personified by the secretary of state for the colonies. A contributory factor was that to retain his popular support he was always under pressure to outbid P.A.P.

The trouble began in July when the chief minister demanded that the governor, Sir Robert Black, appoint four assistant ministers in addition to the six who were already ministers. The governor agreed to appoint two but drew the line at four on the ground that this would make the Labor Front into a Mexican army with ten officers and only five privates. The opposition parties in the assembly endorsed the governor's criticisms. Within a few days Marshall shifted his ground: the issue ceased to be a question of two assistant ministers or four, and became instead an attack on the remnants of British authority in the Rendel constitution. Sir Robert Black considered that the number of assistant ministers to be appointed was a matter on which he was required to consult the chief minister but was not bound to follow his recommendation. He argued that his decision was a justifiable exercise of the discretionary power vested in him, and was an exception to the rule that in the generality of cases he must accept the advice of his ministers. Marshall interpreted this to mean that the governor believed that "he may accept or reject my advice at pleasure," thereby making the constitution "a farce and a fraud upon the people." The issue, he declared, was "whether the Governor governs or we govern." On July 25 he introduced a resolution in the assembly which demanded that "where the Governor is required . . . to consult with the Chief Minister before taking any action he should act in accordance with such advice." The Labor Front "intend that the Rendel Constitution should give effective government by the people, as of now. There can be no dual control. Either you govern or we do." Marshall's resolution went on to declare that "The time has arrived for the transfer of power from the United Kingdom, and a new constitution providing self-government should be

granted immediately." All the parties in the assembly voted for the resolution, which was carried by twenty-eight votes to one, the three official members abstaining.

Marshall was asking for much more than when he assumed office four months earlier, since at that date he spoke of attaining self-government within four years. The Conservative press of Great Britain was critical of any further political concessions, and the Liberal *Economist* believed that "the events of the last few days show that Singapore is far from ready for full self-government." The secretary of state for the colonies, Lennox-Boyd, was shortly to visit Singapore, and Marshall's action presented him with a difficult choice. He might dissolve the assembly and order fresh elections, but in this case P.A.P. would probably emerge as the leading party. He might suspend the constitution, whereupon P.A.P.'s trade unions and students would renew the disturbances of May and June. The third choice was to negotiate with Marshall on the terms of his motion, and this was the one adopted by the secretary of state. In August it was announced that he had modified the clauses of the constitution which in certain cases had authorized the governor to act on his own discretion after consultation with the chief minister. Henceforth the governor would follow his advice. The original point at issue was settled in Marshall's favor. He was also invited to confer with the secretary of state in London on his demand for self-government after the Rendel constitution had been in operation for a year.

Problems of Chinese education

Singapore has the same types of school as the Federation, but the Malay and Tamil vernacular schools have less than 7 per cent of the pupils. The large majority attend the English schools, government and aided, and the Chinese private schools. There are both English and Chinese secondary schools. As in the Federation many of the latter have been centers of nationalist and sometimes Communist propaganda, and until recently at least the government's efforts to prevent this have been ineffective. Before the war only a minority of the Chinese schools received grants-in-aid. The number of pupils in schools of all types was about half the population of school age. After 1945 the popular demand for education was much greater than before the war, and enrollment rapidly increased. The population too was growing very rapidly. In 1954 it was believed that there were 145,000 children between the ages of seven and twelve, and an annual increase of 18,000 was anticipated for the following years. To meet the need a very extensive building program was undertaken and an increase in the number of teachers was sought.

The policy of the government was to provide eventually six years of free primary education for all children between the ages of six and twelve, along with secondary education for those who would profit from it. The language of instruction in the primary schools was Chinese, Malay, Tamil, or English.

The principle was accepted that any parent might if he chose send his child to an English school, so far as vacant places were available. In the vernacular schools English was to be taught from the third year onwards. It was greatly in demand because of its utility in earning a living, and it seemed the only possible common language, since Chinese, Malays, and Tamils would not learn one another's languages. There was the hope that a common language would help to create political and social unity. It was also intended that the schools should foster a capacity for self-government and the creation of a feeling of loyalty to Singapore. This meant that the Chinese schools must stop inculcating a foreign patriotism. The total enrollment rose from 86,895 in 1947 to 180,382 in 1954; in the latter year 82,715 were in English and 85,686 in Chinese schools. About four fifths of the pupils in English schools were Chinese. Of those receiving a secondary education in 1954, 13,400 were in English and 8480 in Chinese schools. By 1953 grants were given to 203 of the 277 registered Chinese schools, but the amount was considerably less than was given to aided English schools.

The Communists were strongly entrenched in the Chinese schools, particularly in the large secondary schools. They included both teachers and pupils up to twenty-five years of age, some of whom purposely remained in order to carry on agitation. A students' union was set up which controlled some of the schools and made them one of the most potent weapons of the Malayan Communist party. The majority of the students did not realize that they were being used by the Communists. Their support was won by appealing to their strong Chinese nationalism, and intimidation was used to coerce recalcitrants. The teachers, principals, and school committees of management were thoroughly cowed, and the parents were unable to control their children. The real authority in the classroom was the Communist student. His instructions from the Communist Youth Corps were that he was "to help and lead the student bodies in carrying out extracurricular activities and to prevent study for study's sake." At his discretion he ordered the discontinuance of the regular curriculum, and replaced it by a session of Marxist indoctrination. The result was that the Chinese schools produced students who were "virulently nationalistic and militantly radical." An American observer described them as "organized into a force which since May 1954 has been capable of intimidating teachers and school authorities, defying the government and police, organizing illegal mass demonstrations, fomenting labor unrest, and turning strikes into violent riots . . . The youth in them [the schools] is being corrupted and perverted through skillful use of Chinese nationalism and propaganda into a dangerous weapon for the Malayan Communist Party . . . What sort of citizens will they prove to be in a Malayan setting when Chinese chauvinism, inspired by Marxian Communism, is the mainspring of their intellectual processes?"

The first appearance of the teenagers on the political scene was in May 1954, when the government put into force a law that required a selected

number of youths between eighteen and twenty to take part-time training for either the armed forces or civil defense against the Communist terrorists. The students organized a riotous demonstration in protest, barricaded themselves in one of their schools, and continued their agitation for ten days. Seven of their leaders were convicted and sentenced to short terms in prison. The result was to make the students increasingly radical, nationalistic, and defiant of government authority. When P.A.P. was formed late in 1954 they gave it their strong support. They took an active part in the election of April 1955, and were prominent in the strikes and riots of the following months. They were further emboldened by the failure of Marshall's attempt to restore discipline in the schools.

In 1954 the government decided to increase the grants-in-aid to Chinese schools so that they would be on exactly the same scale as those to English schools. They would cover the cost of all recurrent expenditure, for example salaries and upkeep, and half of all capital expenditure, such as new building. In return the schools must conform to the department of education's regulations. This meant that the curriculum must be given a Malayan and not a Chinese emphasis promoting loyalty to Singapore and not to China, that discipline must be restored, and that teenagers must study and not take part in politics. These conditions were the same as those imposed on the English, Malay, and Indian schools. The Chinese teachers resented any interference with their freedom of action, and accused the government of plotting to destroy Chinese culture. About three quarters of the eligible schools, including the high schools, refused the government's offer. Supported by many of the wealthy Chinese businessmen and their community generally they demanded equal financial aid without the control to which all the other aided schools were subjected. In short the Chinese schools asked for a uniquely privileged position. The teachers were enthusiastically supported by their students.

The government in 1955 appointed a committee which included representatives of all the parties in the assembly to review Chinese educational policy. The report was published in 1956 and emphasized the great divergence in the pattern of education given in the English and Chinese schools. The committee recorded "a grave fear that antagonism and divided loyalty will increase, unless we bring the two main educational groups—the Chinese educated and the English educated—closer together. If this trend is not halted and reversed, it may be impossible to weld all groups into a nation." The government must avoid any action which would arouse "the slightest suspicion of any wish to interfere with the cultural development of Chinese in Singapore." But while the Chinese schools must receive the same scale of grants as the others they must submit to the same measure of control, "no more and no less." The curriculum of all schools must be approved by the department of education, and the textbooks both of Chinese and English schools must be revised so that all of them would encourage a loyalty to Singapore and a

Malayan consciousness. An intelligent discussion of public affairs was approved, but discipline must be restored and students should not take an active part in strikes and party politics. "There must be constant vigilance to see that any particular form of normal student activity is not perverted by groups whose sole intention is to overthrow a lawfully constituted government by unlawful activities." The Chinese English teachers' union immediately condemned the report as an attempt to undermine "the China-consciousness of the Chinese." It went on to attack the veto on student participation in strikes and political activities. The government refused to modify its policy, and gradually the majority of the schools accepted its terms and applied for the new scale of grants. A minority were still holding out in 1957 and, with the support of some of the wealthy leaders of the Singapore Chinese, were accusing the government of planning to "deal a death blow to Chinese education."

When Lim Yew-hock succeeded Marshall as chief minister in 1956 he insisted that Communist control of the schools must be eradicated and discipline restored. This was part of his general campaign against Communist subversion in Singapore. In September 1956 he arrested six Chinese including trade-union officials, teachers, and students, with the intention of deporting those who were aliens. One hundred and forty-two students were expelled, and several Communist-front organizations were dissolved, including the students' union and the Chinese brass gong musical society. The students promptly went out on strike, and about 5000 of them took over control of six schools. Teachers and principals were helpless, and parents who came to the schools for their children were turned away by student sentries. The students and the Communist-controlled unions organized disorderly protests which culminated in serious riots, in which fifteen were killed and over a hundred injured. The *Straits Times* recorded that "For two days a great port was brought to a virtual standstill." Police and troops had to be brought in from the Federation to suppress the disturbances. P.A.P. came into verbal action on the side of disorder. As an interesting point of technique some of the mobs in the streets were dispersed by tear gas bombs dropped from helicopters. In the Chinese schools which had been the worst offenders, all pupils were required to produce sponsors who would guarantee that they would confine themselves to their studies and not take part in politics. Those who declined were told that they would be refused admission to any school.

Social services and economics

When the census of 1931 was taken 38 per cent of the Chinese population in Singapore had been born there. The census of 1947 showed that the percentage had risen to 60, and in the middle fifties estimates put it as high as 70 per cent. This was the result of the improvement in the sex ratio, and the marked

tendency of the Chinese to remain in the colony. Moreover it was a young population: in 1955, 54 per cent of the Chinese were under twenty-one years of age. The birth rate was high, and the infant mortality rate (deaths per thousand infants under twelve months) had been brought down from 140 in 1940 to 67 in 1953. As a result the rate of population growth exceeded 3.5 per cent, and was one of the highest in the world. It was estimated that by 1972 the population would be about 2,000,000 of whom 46 per cent would be children under fourteen. This raised two very serious problems, the expansion of the social services to meet greatly increased needs, and the provision of employment for the thousands who sought it.

Prewar social services were good by Asian standards and of course inadequate by those of the wealthy industrialized nations of the West. The explanation was the same as in other parts of the tropics: taxation could not produce enough revenue to pay for them. They were better than the average because Malaya provided so large a share of the world's rubber and tin, and Singapore had also its entrepôt trade. After the war official policy stressed expansion of the social services, and public demand for them was very much greater than it had been before 1941. The prewar services were markedly increased, and others were established which had hardly existed in the earlier period. Recurrent expenditure (salaries, maintenance of buildings, etc.) on education together with capital expenditure (buildings) rose from \$1,300,000 in 1947 to over \$25,000,000 in the estimated expenditure for 1957, and was 22.9 per cent of the total expenditure of the colony. The next heaviest item was the medical and health services which for recurrent and capital expenditure combined increased from \$2,700,000 in 1947 to an estimated total of \$14,000,000 in 1957. Total expenditure, recurrent and capital, increased from \$42,000,000 in 1947 to an estimated \$107,000,000 for 1957. During the same period the revenue rose from nearly \$46,000,000 to an estimate of about \$73,000,000 for 1957.

During most of the decade 1947-1957 the revenue of the colony was enough to pay for capital as well as recurrent expenditure. As more new schools, hospitals, and so on were built, however, deficits began to appear. With the growth of population and the demand for further expansion of social services Singapore was faced with the prospect of steadily rising expenditure and higher taxes. In this connection the financial secretary made an important announcement in his speech on the budget estimates for 1957. The government was anxious to attract foreign capital, and for this reason was unwilling to raise the company income tax above the level of 30 per cent of profits at which it had stood since 1951. This rate was reasonably well aligned with those in comparable territories. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development sent a mission of investigation to Malaya in 1954. It suggested an expenditure of some \$200,000,000 between 1955 and 1959.⁵ Over half of this was for the expansion of essential services such as electricity, water, sewerage, roads, harbor works, and extension of the

airport. The rest was for social services, among which public building of low-cost rental housing and an expansion of education were particularly stressed.

The mission also advised government encouragement of manufacturing, "mainly following the pattern of an expansion of small and medium scale enterprise over a very wide front, but possibly also in a few lines of larger scale manufacturing." This was necessary both in Singapore and the Federation to provide additional employment for a population that was growing so rapidly. The mission made the obvious but uncomfortable comment that "There remains nevertheless, the crucial question whether the rates of economic progress and additions to employment opportunities can move ahead of or even keep up with the pace at which the population and the labor force are growing."⁶ If manufacturing is to expand a larger market is needed than Singapore. It is uncertain to what extent this can be found in adjacent countries since they have their own plans for industrialization and protect their industries by tariff barriers. The Federation could provide a small market if arrangements could be made whereby it waived its import duties on articles manufactured in Singapore. However, there is also the problem of creating employment for a growing population in the peninsula, and one way in which it hopes to do this is by encouraging manufacturing. Communist influence in Singapore is based on its championship of the workmen and its appeals to Chinese nationalism. Up to 1957 the government had not had much success in attempts to eradicate it. From the Communist point of view nothing could be better than widespread and growing unemployment in the future. It is not impossible that a party sympathetic to Peking and perhaps dominated by Communists might win control of the government of Singapore through the medium of a democratic election.

Singapore and the federation

There are cogent economic reasons why the colony and the Federation should be united, for in no other way can the thousands who are coming on the labor market each year hope to find employment. The entrepôt trade is shrinking and Singapore cannot live by taking in its own washing. Both Marshall and Lim Yew-hock are strongly in favor of union. The principal argument against it is political: if the Chinese of Singapore were joined with those of the peninsula the slight Malay majority would be converted into a minority. The Labor Front government has discussed the matter several times with Tungku Abdul Rahman, and the latter has given various reasons for his refusal to agree. Singapore would never be given its full independence by Great Britain owing to its strategic importance and because the United States would object. Alternatively the government had shown that it was not strong enough to control the Communists.⁷ Incidentally this could equally be an argument in favor of union. The Alliance government had shown itself more determined than Marshall in opposing the Communists. It also

controlled the Malay Regiment while Singapore had no troops of its own—though it is now taking steps to raise one battalion—and a police force of only 4500. At the time of the riots in September 1956 troops and police had to be moved in from the Federation. If Singapore came under Communist control it would be almost as dangerous on the doorstep of the Federation as within it, and a combined administration would be more capable of resisting the threat than the Singapore government alone.

In January 1956 Tunjku Abdul Rahman indicated that he would agree to union if the colony came in not as an equal partner but as a subordinate unit, "so that we could have control in the affairs of Singapore."⁸ This appeared to mean that it would be relegated to the status of one of the Malay states. Singapore had always felt that it was at least as important as the Federation, and there had been more than a hint of patronage in its attitude. As a Singapore newspaper ruefully remarked, the news came as a political bombshell, and many local political leaders were highly indignant. In 1957 Tunjku Abdul Rahman announced that he did not think there was "any possibility of a merger," although the Federation would help Singapore in any way it could, since "we are in such proximity that anything that happens in Singapore can happen to the Federation." He would not have Singapore even as a subordinate unit.⁹ This reinforced a statement made some months earlier that he was in "permanent opposition" to union. These pronouncements showed an important change in attitude. In 1956 the Tunjku had said that Singapore could come in "only as a unit, like any other Settlement." At that time the operative factor was the terms of merger; but in 1957 the idea itself appeared to be unwelcome. Abdul Rahman did not explain why he had changed his mind, but one is inclined to wonder whether it was connected with the recrudescence of communalism in the Federation. This had shown itself in the party organization of the Alliance, and in the riots between Malays and Chinese at Penang in January 1957, in which five were killed and nearly one hundred injured. In this situation it would be inexpedient for a leader whose position depended on the Malay vote to suggest a merger that would create a Chinese majority. Dato Onn and his I.M.P. showed what could happen to a Malay politician who tried to ignore communal issues.

Marshall and St. George

In December 1955 Marshall arranged with the secretary of state for the colonies an agenda for a constitutional conference in April 1956. He returned confident that Singapore would attain internal self-government in April 1957. He received assurances that his demands had been granted in principle, but as April approached he began to stir up popular emotions, so that he could confront the British government with a unanimous and vociferous demand. In Marshall's public speeches the secretary of state for the

colonies had a double role in which he alternated with remarkable rapidity. One week he was the emancipator of colonial peoples, and the next he suddenly became the dragon of colonialism. Lee Kuan-yew, the leader of P.A.P., seconded Marshall's efforts. He stated that if Singapore's demands were not granted this would "discredit and bankrupt" constitutional action. P.A.P. and the other parties might "have to set out to break the constitution." One of Marshall's expedients was to place a book in the government buildings where citizens who favored *merdeka* were urged to write their names. One man who wrote "no *merdeka*" was publicly castigated as "contemptible" and "a coward." He was, however, representative of a considerable number of Singaporeans who wrote to the newspapers doubting the wisdom of too hasty a grant of self-government. They believed that the Communists were far better organized than their opponents, and that time was needed before an effective counter to them could be built up.

In March ten members of the House of Commons flew to Singapore to investigate the desire for self-government. Marshall arranged a mass rally to greet them on their arrival at the Singapore airport. He intended this to be a monster demonstration in favor of *merdeka*, but unfortunately about 4000 Communists, Chinese students, and fellow travelers took over control and turned it into a riot. The *Straits Times* expressed the alarm felt by moderate opinion, Malayan as well as European, when it wrote that "As the Chief Minister has admitted between his synthetic crises, self-government is already within Singapore's grasp. The more hatred and struggle is preached the more certainly the Labour Front plays into Communist hands. Mr. Marshall cannot forever talk crisis without eventually getting one . . . The Labour Front Government must cease its mock battle with colonial oppression, and by sane and good government now remove the chill of fear which is beginning to grip all of Singapore which does not yet owe allegiance to Communism." The riot alarmed the Socialist members of parliament as much as the Conservative, and their disquiet was shared by public opinion in Great Britain. It seemed unwise to give the Labor Front complete self-government and especially control of internal security including the police when it had shown itself unable to maintain order. Existing doubts were strengthened as to how long Marshall's government, which had received the votes of little more than a quarter of the electorate, could maintain itself in power.

The London conference

Marshall took with him to London representatives of all the political parties. He submitted a memorandum which demanded that Singapore become an independent territory within the British Commonwealth on or about April 1, 1957.¹⁰ The government would consist of a legislative assembly of fifty members, all of them elected, and a cabinet responsible to it. The queen would be represented by a governor general, who would act in accordance with the

advice of his ministers. The government would have complete control of internal affairs including security, subject to the provision explained below in cases of emergency. The United Kingdom would have charge of external defense, and it or any other member of the Commonwealth might maintain in Singapore such armed forces as they considered necessary. The United Kingdom would also control foreign affairs with the exceptions of trade and commerce, which would be the responsibility of the government of Singapore. A week later Marshall added cultural relations to this list. In the conduct of foreign affairs the government of the United Kingdom must consult Singapore, which must be allowed to have its own diplomatic representatives abroad. Apparently too the British control of foreign affairs would be dependent on the approval of the defense council which Marshall proposed to create and in which Singapore would have a veto.

On the crucial question of internal security the memorandum recognized that "no precise line can be drawn between defence and external affairs, on the one hand, and internal administration on the other." The naval base and airfield could be very seriously affected by strikes with violence especially if the Communists succeeded in extending them to include the thousands of laborers employed there. A defense council would be established which could discuss any question affecting defense, foreign relations, and internal security. It would be composed of the representative of the government of the United Kingdom and three additional British delegates, the prime minister of Singapore, and three other Singapore delegates appointed by him. When the votes were equally divided the motion would be lost. The government of Singapore's control of internal security was not likely to be overruled in the defense council since each side had an equal number of representatives, and the British chairman did not have a second or casting vote. The British armed forces could only intervene in a matter of internal security if called upon by the government of Singapore.

Marshall's memorandum was supported by statistics which proved that the population was larger than that of several members of the United Nations including Panama, Iceland, and Jordan, and that the revenue exceeded that of sixteen minor members of the U.N. "There is no doubt that Singapore could undertake its defence and the conduct of its external relations at least as well as any of the smaller States Members of the United Nations," and the offer to place them under British control was "not due to any doubts about the capacity of the future Government of Singapore." On the contrary "Britain is being invited to defend Singapore because it needs to defend Singapore in its own interest." Marshall admitted the danger of Communist infiltration and subversion, but argued that "*merdeka* will rally the majority of the people against Communism."

The Colonial Office was willing to grant a wide measure of self-government, but felt that there were particular circumstances connected with Singapore which made a certain amount of caution essential. The strategic

value of the island was not the only ground for hesitation. The Colonial Office was gravely concerned about the possibility that Marshall's government might be replaced by one which was either Communist or at best pro-Peking. These misgivings were reinforced by the doubts expressed by Australia and New Zealand as to Singapore's ability to defend itself against internal or external attack. Their opinion could not be disregarded since Singapore was a key point on their line of communications, and they had committed their forces to the defense of Malaya. Lennox-Boyd, the secretary of state for the colonies, showed his disquiet in his opening address of welcome to the *merdeka* delegation on April 23.¹¹ "We do not intend that Singapore should become an outpost of Communist China and, in fact, a colony of Peking." The secretary of state went on to point out that attack did not always or normally come from without but rather from within, and that in Singapore it had already begun. "The threat in Singapore is one of subversion by highly organised and powerful Communist groups." "Those responsible for external defence cannot be dissociated from active interest in internal security or called on only when affairs have got largely out of hand." Lennox-Boyd might have added that the Labor Front government was only supported by 27 per cent of the votes, that it had held office less than a year, and that while Marshall's personal hostility to Communism was unquestioned his record in coping with subversion was not altogether reassuring. He politely hinted at this when he pointed out that the British government was "asked to take the irrevocable step of abrogating all rights and powers of any sort in connection with Singapore for all time" except at the request "of whatever government Singapore may have at any time in the future." "They are asked to do this at a moment in history when there has been no appreciable period of stable democratic government in Singapore, when no political party at present holds a commanding majority, when it is impossible to foresee what the future may bring in internal political development, and when strong subversive forces are known to be at work: and all this in an island state of the greatest strategic importance in the defence of the free world."

Inevitably the contrast suggests itself of the very different policy followed in the Federation of Malaya, but the two are not identical. The Alliance government was supported by an overwhelming majority, and there had never been any suggestion of hesitancy in adopting anti-Communist measures. In addition the nationalism of the Chinese was counterbalanced by a Malay majority which did not exist in Singapore. The Colonial Office doubted another of Marshall's arguments, his assertion of the economic viability of Singapore. It was not sure that industrialization could keep pace with the rapid increase of the population, or that the Communists would not win new strength from a growing number of unemployed Chinese. If Singapore had been part of the Federation its economic prospects would have been better, but union was not practical politics.

The secretary of state agreed to almost all the delegation's demands.¹² Marshall's proposal for a separate Singapore citizenship was accepted in principle. Aliens who had lived in the colony for ten years could be registered as citizens if they took an oath of loyalty to Singapore and renounced their allegiance to any foreign state. This concession would affect principally some 300,000 Chinese adult immigrants who wanted the rights of citizenship but were unwilling to become naturalized as British subjects. The legislative assembly would have fifty elected members, and the official and nominated members would be abolished. The three official members in the council of ministers would likewise be eliminated, and it would be composed entirely of ministers drawn from the assembly and responsible to it. The queen's representative, the high commissioner, would govern in accordance with the advice of his ministers, except as regards foreign affairs and defense. Trade and commerce would be controlled by the council of ministers. The high commissioner would have the power to intervene in matters of internal security if an emergency arose. He would act through a defense and security council established for the control of internal security, defense, and foreign policy "on any matters of common concern." The British and Singapore governments would have an equal number of members, with the high commissioner as chairman. He would have a casting vote if the votes were equal, and in this way the British government would control the council. This was the vital difference from Marshall's proposals. He had designed a council wherein an equality of votes would mean a deadlock—in other words the Singapore government would be able to veto any British attempt to intervene in internal security. The secretary of state emphasized that while the United Kingdom must retain "*ultimate* authority" in internal security it "would be exercised only in case of clear necessity." He would give guarantees that this power would be used only in the last resort. There was the further consideration that Singapore had no troops of its own, and the only force at its disposal was the police. In the last analysis it must rely on British troops to maintain order. If the government delayed calling upon them until the situation had got out of hand, casualties would probably be incurred which might have been avoided if subversive elements had been overawed earlier by a display of force. "It would not be possible to persuade any United Kingdom Parliament to accept liability to send British troops into Singapore to operate under the orders of any Singapore government which might be in office."

The negotiations broke down because Marshall refused to agree to any workable compromise on the control of internal security. He put forward counter proposals on May 1. These suggested that for a transitional period of six years only the United Kingdom might suspend the constitution and assume full responsibility for governing Singapore "if the defence installations were threatened by a deterioration in the internal security situation, or if the Government of Singapore had acted in contravention of the constitution." The proposal was rejected by the Colonial Office for several reasons.

The right of intervention was limited to six years, although it was impossible to foresee whether at the end of that period the Communist menace would be ended and Singapore would have a stable government. If intervention should become necessary the British government must either do nothing or else take the very drastic step of suspending the constitution. This would lead to violent protests against British imperialism, and the Communists would be able to play their favorite role of the champions of Asian freedom against colonialism. The practical result would be that the British government would hesitate to use this power until the situation had got dangerously out of hand. It was quite possible that circumstances might arise which were serious enough to need intervention, and yet did not require so extreme a measure as reimposing complete British control. The secretary of state therefore insisted on a defense council in which the high commissioner as chairman would have an original and a casting vote. He must also have the power to make regulations which would have the force of law on defense, foreign policy, and the preservation of public order, so far as this was necessary for the security of the Singapore base. The secretary of state promised that these powers would be used only in an emergency, and then only after a recommendation of the defense council. Marshall strongly objected to the proposals, but finally agreed to accept them if the chairman of the defense council were not the high commissioner, but a Malayan to be appointed by the government of the Federation of Malaya. Alternatively the chairman might be appointed by the U.N. The secretary of state rejected both suggestions since they deprived the British government of the control of the defense council, on which hinged the powers of emergency legislation and control of internal security. He offered, however, to discuss after two years had elapsed whether the defense council should be continued.

Apparently the Singapore delegation was divided in its attitude, several members feeling that the United Kingdom had come so close to granting complete internal self-government that Marshall should accept the terms. Marshall refused to modify his position, and the conference came to an end on May 15. The secretary of state announced on May 29 that his offer was still open. The chief minister declared his intention of resigning, and on his return to Singapore issued a statement in which he said that "it should now be plain that the Colonial Office talk about asking only for powers to discharge external defence responsibilities is pure eye-wash to fool public opinion." On June 6 the legislative assembly held a debate in which Marshall made a vehement attack on the Colonial Office, describing its proposals as "an agreement which would make of future Singapore governments de facto stooges of the Governor." It was "a fraudulent constitution which takes away with one hand even more than it pretends to give with the other," and its purpose was to keep Singapore indefinitely under the control of Colonial Office officials "who have been matured in the traditions of authoritarian rule." Marshall also attacked Menzies, the prime minister of Australia, for

supporting the British position. He admitted that his delegation had not been united, and that he had been shaken when the conservative Liberal-Socialists asked for safeguards against undivided Singapore control of internal security. P.A.P. seized the opportunity to present itself as the champion of Asian freedom. "There are only two ways open now—revolution by violence or revolution by consent." The leader of the Liberal-Socialists blamed Marshall and not the secretary of state for the failure. "Blinded by uncontrollable, self-imagined disappointment and rage, the Chief Minister could not see his way to accept Britain's offer of what was tantamount to full internal self-government, which in the first place he had asked for." Commenting on the debate, the *Straits Times* remarked on June 7 that Marshall's "disregard of the facts [was] sublime . . . He was getting far more even than he intended to ask for when he visited London in December. He then chose to play for still higher stakes. He lost as he was bound to, and having spurned the substance of what Singapore sought, now reviles the Colonial Office . . . His egotism, his impatience and his inexperience broke the merdeka mission. Failure in London lay in his own personality more than anything else."

Merdeka

Marshall resigned and was succeeded as chief minister by Lim Yewhock. His anti Communist measures reassured the Colonial Office and in 1957 it agreed that Singapore should receive internal self-government including the control of security after January 1, 1958. The principal differences from the terms which Marshall had proposed in 1956 were the following. The legislative assembly would have fifty-one elected members. The queen would be represented by a Malayan with the title of yang di-pertuan negara, and a commissioner would represent the United Kingdom government. The British government would have charge of defense and foreign affairs apart from trade and cultural relations. The two last would be conducted by the Singapore government with its assent, and the governments would consult one another on all problems of defense and foreign policy which affected Singapore. If law and order were jeopardized the decision to ask for the help of British forces in aid of the civil authorities would rest with the Singapore government. The government of Great Britain would "retain ultimate discretion whether, how and to what extent to accede to such a request." An internal security council would be established to decide all questions affecting "the maintenance of public safety and public order." Lim Yew-hock proposed a modification in the membership which the Colonial Office accepted, and so broke the deadlock of the previous year. The council would have seven members, three from Great Britain, three from Singapore (the prime minister and two others), and one from the Federation of ministerial rank. The British commissioner would be the chairman of the council, but would have only one vote. In the event of a tie the decisive vote would lie

with the representative from the Federation, and it would be he who would decide any conflict of opinion between the United Kingdom and Singapore governments, for example, whether the former could intervene in a matter of internal security. Tungku Abdul Rahman was consulted by both sides, and expressed his willingness to nominate a member. The United Kingdom government retained the right to suspend the constitution at any time "if in their opinion the internal situation in Singapore had so far deteriorated as to threaten their ability to carry out their responsibilities for external affairs or defence, or if the Singapore Government had acted in contravention of the Constitution." It is hard to imagine an emergency dire enough to induce a contemporary British government to invoke this clause.

In view of the strength of Communist influence the United Kingdom government insisted that they only agreed to the new constitution and particularly the internal security arrangements provided that "persons known to have been engaged in subversive activity should not be eligible for election to the first Legislative Assembly of the new State of Singapore." The Labor Front government and the opposition political parties thoroughly approved the agreement but rejected the condition as undemocratic. Logically this could not be reconciled with the legislature's approval in 1956 of Lim Yew-hock's arrest and detention of one of its members on the ground that he was a prominent Communist. The explanation was that all the anti-Communist parties were afraid to accept the proviso since to do so would lay them open to P.A.P.'s accusation that they were tools of British colonialism. Characteristically the only dissident was Marshall, who approved the prohibition against Communist candidates but condemned the constitution as a device to perpetuate British control. The attitude of the Colonial Office towards the protests from Singapore was that the ban on seditionists was the prerequisite for the grant of internal self-government. "Some temporary restriction of this kind was essential to safeguard the orderly development of democratic government in Singapore against the dangers of Communist subversion." This could be freely translated that Singapore democracy was such an immature growth that special precautions must be taken against blight.

The fears of the British government were confirmed by the events which took place a few months later. A number of the members and officeholders of P.A.P. were known to belong to the secret Communist organization, and for some time they had carried on a campaign to strengthen their influence in the party. Their success became evident in August 1957, when they captured control of P.A.P.'s central executive committee from Lee Kuan-yew and his supporters. He refused to continue as secretary since he no longer controlled the party, and admitted that it had been used as a Communist front. The Communists attached great importance to this maneuver, and a party report emphasized that the success of "progressive forces" in Singapore depended to a very large degree on the relations between the Communists and P.A.P. The government did not overstate the case when it declared that "The

Communist penetration of the P.A.P. can now no longer be disguised." The Communists also regained to a large extent the control over the trade unions which had been temporarily weakened by the government's measures in 1956. P.A.P. was firmly linked with the trade unions, and there was revived activity among the Chinese students.

The government of Singapore arrested thirty-nine of the Communist leaders in August 1957 under the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance. The arrested men could be held in prison for two years without trial or any recourse to the normal channels of justice. They could, however, appeal to a tribunal of judicial officials which could order the release of any detainee if it were not satisfied with the evidence which convinced the government that the arrest was justified. This ordinance was passed because experience proved that it was impossible to obtain convictions since witnesses who would give conclusive evidence in private did not dare publicly to repeat it in a court of law. Eighteen of those arrested were P.A.P. officials, including five out of the six leading leftists on the central executive committee, and the rest were prominent trade unionists and journalists. Lim Yew-hock issued a white paper which described in detail how the Communists had rebuilt their organization after the setback they had received the previous year.¹³ "New leaders and organisers have taken the place of those removed. As each month goes by Communist activities become more frequent and more blatant, and the power of persons known to be Communists grows. Once again the aim is to bring about a united front of workers, farmers and students supported by a favourable press and by political sympathisers." "Once again a serious threat is developing. Communists and their agents are back in key positions, daily increasing their propaganda and their power, and steadily strengthening the extent of their control and thus again building up a united Communist front. If the situation is allowed to deteriorate, it will become increasingly difficult to check the threat, and decisive action will be resisted with consequent rioting and bloodshed." Lim Yew-hock therefore struck first, instead of waiting until the Communists had completed their preparations and committed overt acts of sedition which would justify their arrest. He made the further claim that "If at this stage in Singapore's political development, there has not been time for a strong public opinion to develop against the enticements and intimidations of Communists and their fellow-travellers, the elected government in the interests of the people have an inescapable duty to step in and frustrate the attempts to create an essentially dictatorial Communist state." This frank avowal of the political immaturity of Singapore's democracy underlined the dangers latent in the British grant of complete internal self-government.

Notes

- 1 *Constitutional Commission Singapore, 1954. Straits Budget*, May 20, 1954.
- 2 For example, *Straits Budget*, April 28, 1955.
- 3 *Ibid.*, May 21, 1955.
- 4 *Ibid.*, Sept. 15, 1955.
- 5 International Bank Mission, *The Economic Development of Malaya* (Baltimore, 1955), pp. 37-38.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
- 7 *Straits Budget*, Aug. 11, 1955.
- 8 *Ibid.*, Jan. 26, 1956.
- 9 *Ibid.*, Jan. 17 and 24, 1957.
- 10 Parl. Pap. Cmd. 9777 of 1956, *Singapore Constitutional Conference*, pp. 10-19.
- 11 *Daily Telegraph*, April 25, 1956.
- 12 Parl. Pap. Cmd. 9777 of 1956, *Singapore Constitutional Conference*, pp. 19-24.
- 13 *Straits Budget*, Aug. 15, 22, and 29, 1957.

BRITISH BORNEO

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STATUS OF BRITISH BORNEO

Raymond Kennedy

Source: *Far Eastern Survey* 14(17) (1945):243-6.

The political development of the natives of the three parts of British Borneo—British North Borneo, Sarawak, and Brunei¹—was virtually non-existent prior to the present war. The only natives, or resident Chinese, or other non-Europeans, who participated at all in the administrative system were the Sultan of Brunei, who was entirely under the control of the British Resident; appointees to purely advisory councils; lower employees of the Civil Service in North Borneo and Sarawak; advisors of native law courts in North Borneo; a few constabulary officers in North Borneo; and chieftains with local jurisdiction only. No voting occurred, and no political parties existed. Native political consciousness was, according to all evidence, practically absent.

The only perceptible trend towards any native political development was in Sarawak, and this was instigated by the Rajah himself. In 1941, he announced a plan to draft a constitution for his state, providing for a legislature which would be representative of the natives and other groups in Sarawak. The constitution was never drawn up, and exactly what the Rajah had in mind has never been divulged. In 1941, also, the Rajah voluntarily tempered his autocratic rule to some degree by making his decisions subject to the approval of his council. The members of the council—representatives of the Dyaks, Malays, and Chinese, the three main ethnic groups in Sarawak—were all appointed by the Rajah.

Early commercial contacts

Borneo, especially Brunei, was drawn intermittently into commercial and political relations with Portugal and Spain from 1511 until about 1650, but these contacts weakened to the point of disappearance when the Dutch and British East India companies entered the island. The Dutch established trading posts on the west coast in 1604, and were closely followed by their British

rivals in 1609. As the Dutch solidified their influence in Java, they secured concessions in Borneo from Javanese sultans who exercised nominal rule over the southern part of the island. The British thus came to concentrate upon the northern districts, and, with the rise of Singapore, trade with Sarawak and Brunei increased.

In 1841 the Sultan of Brunei ceded to James Brooke, a retired British officer of the Indian army, the whole of Sarawak as a reward for his aid in quelling a civil war and suppressing piracy. In 1888 the second Rajah Brooke signed a treaty granting control of the foreign relations of Sarawak to the British Government. Previously, in 1847, the Sultan of Brunei had ceded the island of Labuan to Great Britain; in 1848 it became a Crown Colony; and in 1907 was annexed to the Straits Settlements. Brunei was placed under British protection in 1888, and in 1906 the Sultan by treaty yielded administration to a British Resident, although he kept his title and nominal rulership. British North Borneo, in 1877 and 1878, was transferred to a British syndicate by the Sultans of Sulu and Brunei, and in 1881 the syndicate made over its concession to the British North Borneo Provisional Association, which was granted a charter by the British Crown. In 1882 this Association was reorganized as the British North Borneo Company, the last surviving chartered company with governmental powers in the world. Finally, in 1888, the "State of North Borneo" was placed under British protection, with the Company retaining control of all administrative aspects except foreign relations.

As a consequence of these concessions and treaties, all of northern Borneo came under British jurisdiction, the specific arrangements differing in the several sections. The central and southern parts of the island were progressively subjugated by the Dutch, and in 1891 the boundaries between the British and Dutch possessions were delimited by treaty.

The two divisions have remained quite isolated from each other, as the borders run through wild and primitive hinterland where there are no means of communication except rivers and jungle paths. The main lines of trade and communication are found along the coastal circumference, and even here the roads are short and disconnected. Thus the principal routes of contact are by sea; and the British parts of the island are linked by shipping mostly with Singapore to the west, the Dutch sections mainly with Batavia and Surabaya to the south. Actually, therefore, the two political divisions stand back to back, British Borneo facing towards Malaya and the Netherlands territory facing towards Java.

British administration

British administration brought in law and order, a modicum of medical and sanitary service, and a minimum of education. The most obvious effect of law and order has been the great increase in population (North Borneo from 70,000 in 1891 to 320,000 in 1941; Brunei from 22,000 in 1911 to 40,000 in

1941; Sarawak trend not available, present population 500,000). Some of this increase has been owing to the encouraged (and, in the case of North Borneo, partially assisted) immigration of Chinese, who composed between fifteen and twenty percent of the combined population of all three areas in 1941 (fifteen percent in North Borneo, twenty percent in Sarawak, ten percent in Brunei). The Chinese were the second most numerous element in British Borneo, but were outnumbered five to one by the natives (Malays and Dyaks) in North Borneo and Sarawak, and nine to one by the natives in Brunei. A rather large number of Javanese immigrants resided in North Borneo, but were few in the other two sections. The total number of Europeans in all three sections was about 810 (350 in North Borneo, 400 in Sarawak, and 60 in Brunei).

Social services were little developed, hardly at all except in coastal districts. A minimum of free government education was provided in an inadequate number of Malay-language schools. Government-subsidized missionary schools augmented the public schools, and had begun to penetrate the interior, in North Borneo and Sarawak. Chinese-language private schools were found in all three sections. In general, North Borneo was farther advanced in education, public health, and other social services than the other two states; but just before the war the Sarawak government was planning a reorganization of public services, especially education.

Geography and resources

The whole area was a jungle frontier, out of contact with the outside world and with modern developments, except along the coastal fringe. Internal communications were primitive, the entire road system totaling only 823 miles, largely in poor repair (236 miles in North Borneo, 500 miles in Sarawak, and 87 miles in Brunei). One railroad, 127 miles long, extended along the west coast of North Borneo. Most travel and transportation were by water along the coast and up the rivers, and over narrow trails.

Aside from the purely subsistence activities of the natives and some Chinese (rice, sago, forest products mainly), the economy of British Borneo concentrated upon the production of rubber, oil and timber. Rubber was the leading export of North Borneo and Sarawak, but was surpassed by oil in Brunei. Oil was second in importance in Sarawak, but no petroleum has ever been exploited in North Borneo, where timber stood second to rubber in the ranking of exports. In all three states, exports consistently exceeded imports. Trading was mainly in the hands of the Chinese.

Government revenues were derived principally from customs and excise, royalties, and land rents. The notorious opium and gambling monopolies of the British North Borneo Company yielded a sizable portion of the official revenues in that state, although this fact is never mentioned in government reports. The Company paid regular, though moderate, dividends.



Land leases, of varying duration, were under the control of the states, which, however, retained full rights to subsoil wealth. Large areas of each section were allocated to forest reserve. The total amount of alienated land was very small, since much of the area was either unproductive or lacked transportation facilities. The labor supply, moreover, was inadequate, which was the main reason for the encouragement of Chinese immigration. Most of the laborers on oil and rubber developments were Chinese, but in North Borneo native labor was equally important. Only in North Borneo were Javanese coolies used to any appreciable extent.

Future expansion of the export economy seemed rather unlikely in 1941. By comparison with neighboring areas possessing similar economic possibilities (the Netherlands East Indies, Malaya, and the Philippines), British Borneo, in view of its primitive transportation development, inadequate labor supply, and general backwardness, had little to offer. Except for oil, for which there has been a steady and strong demand, British Borneo was a marginal economic area in the general pattern of world trade. Only a sharp rise in the demand for rubber, timber, and perhaps hemp, would attract much foreign capital to this isolated and truly primitive corner of the world.

Except for Imperial Preference, tariffs were equal for the goods of all foreign nations, and free trade and free access for alien capital were the rule. According to all indications, enterprise and investment were more than

welcome, subject, of course, to state supervision and laws. The problem would appear to have been not suppression, but attraction, of foreign capital and business interests.

Information concerning the attitude of the natives towards the British is not available. Considering the remoteness of the area, the almost total lack of contact with the outside world on the part of the natives, and the low state of education and political development, it is likely that the native attitude towards the British was completely amorphous. As for their attitude towards the Japanese, again reliable intelligence is lacking, but in view of the considerations just mentioned, it is probable that the attitude of the natives has been at best neutral.

The British Government has announced no plans for political reorganization of British Borneo. During military operations the whole area will probably be combined under a single military administration. Rumors that all four sections (including Labuan) may be integrated under a centralized government after the war, and possibly attached to the Malaya administration, must be considered in the light of the complicated prewar situation.

Already British Borneo had a connection with Malaya, since (a) the Governor of the Straits Settlements was British Agent for North Borneo and Sarawak; (b) the High Commissioner for the Malay States (who was also Governor of the Straits Settlements) was High Commissioner for Brunei; and (c) Labuan was one of the Straits Settlements (the others being Singapore, Penang, and Malacca).

Brunei, moreover, had a British Resident and Assistant Resident, both officers being detailed from the Malayan Civil Service and under the authority of the High Commissioner for the Malay States. Thus Brunei was virtually one of the Unfederated Malay States already, with almost exactly the same form of government as the five Unfederated Malay States in Malaya.

Position of North Borneo

Except for the fact that the Governor of the Straits Settlements was *ex officio* British Agent for North Borneo, this state had no other connection with Malaya; but was under the administration of a Governor, who was appointed by the Court of Directors of the Company in London with the approval of the Secretary of State for Colonies. The Court of Directors had supreme formal authority but had to act in accordance with the advice of the Secretary of State for Colonies in all matters. Thus North Borneo had virtually the status of a separate Crown Colony with only a tenuous link with Malaya. If the Chartered Company were to be liquidated by the British Government, North Borneo would probably become a Crown Colony.

Sarawak had a status similar to that of North Borneo, but the form of administration differed. The Rajah (rather than the Court of Directors as in North Borneo) had supreme authority, but he was required, since 1941, to

act upon the advice of a "British Representative" (from the Colonial Office) in all matters pertaining to foreign relations, defense, and the rights and status of foreigners. Thus, whereas the Court of Directors of North Borneo had to follow the advice of the Secretary of State for Colonies in all matters of administration, the Rajah of Sarawak was subject only to the British Representative and then solely in respect to the three matters stated.

Summarizing the above pattern of confusion, it may be stated that

- (1) Labuan was already one of the Straits Settlements;
- (2) Brunei was virtually, though not officially, one of the Unfederated Malay States;
- (3) North Borneo was virtually, though not officially, a Crown Colony and, if the Company were to be dissolved, would, under the prewar arrangement, become a true Crown Colony; and
- (4) Sarawak was still a protected state, in the full sense of the term, for the Rajah had complete authority in all matters except foreign relations and defense.

The two latter states, however, had a nebulous sort of connection with Malaya, since the Governor of the Straits Settlements was "British Agent" for both states.

Considering the remarkable complications of this situation, the following possible programs of reorganization would seem most logical:

(1) A Government of British Borneo, with all four parts united under a centralized administration, headed by either a Governor or a High Commissioner. This would probably have to take the form of a federation rather than a union, because it is likely that the traditional rights of the hereditary rulers of Sarawak and Brunei would continue to be honored. Labuan, far separated from the other Straits Settlements, could be attached to North Borneo or Brunei. If such a federation were to be constituted, the Chartered Company would probably be liquidated, and North Borneo would become a "directly administered" territory within the federation, while Sarawak and Brunei would be governed indirectly through their hereditary rulers.

(2) A union of British Borneo with Malaya. The alternatives here would be:

- (a) If the five Unfederated Malay States were to be joined with the four Federated Malay States in an all-Malaya Federation (a plan whose possible adoption has long been under consideration), Sarawak and Brunei could be added as the tenth and eleventh states in the Federation. North Borneo, possibly combined with Labuan, might then become the fourth Straits Settlement; unless, as has been considered, Malacca is absorbed into the State of Negeri Sembilan. In the latter event, North Borneo

would become the third Straits Settlement (the others being Singapore and Penang).

- (b) If the prewar organization of the Malay States were to be restored intact, then Sarawak and Brunei might be joined with either the Federated or the Unfederated Malay States, while North Borneo and Labuan might become the fourth and fifth members of the Straits Settlements.

Problems of reorganization

The complicating factors are quite evident. North Borneo, unlike Sarawak and Brunei, has no hereditary ruler, and it is unlikely that either the Sultan of Sulu in the Philippines (who has made claims to North Borneo) or the Sultan of Brunei would be given authority over this section. Therefore, unless the Chartered Company were to be maintained, which seems improbable, North Borneo could not be ruled indirectly. On the other hand, the British Government has traditionally honored the hereditary rights of "protected rulers," and would therefore almost certainly retain the Sultan of Brunei and the Rajah of Sarawak as titular heads of their domains. Any contemplated reorganization of Malaya would in all probability perpetuate the division between the directly ruled Straits Settlements and the indirectly governed Federated Malay States and Unfederated Malay States. Thus, taking into consideration all of these factors, a uniform administration of all parts of British Borneo and Malaya, or either one of them, would involve such a radical overriding of legal enactments and treaty commitments that it would appear to be unfeasible.

(3) A return to the status quo ante bellum. In desperation over the complications involved in any general reorganization, the British might retreat to old and familiar ground. If this were to be done, two changes would probably be made:

- (a) dissolution of the Chartered Company, and establishment of North Borneo as a Crown Colony, and
 (b) introduction of a conservative constitutional government in Sarawak. As a matter of fact, these are the only two plans for the future of British Borneo which have ever received either official or semi-official public consideration.

Note

- 1 The island of Labuan, off the coast of Brunei, was incorporated in the crown colony of the Straits Settlements.

THE ANTI-CESSION MOVEMENT IN SARAWAK

Yusuf Peter Heaton

Source: *Journal of the Malaysian Historical Society, Sarawak Branch* (Special Issue) (1963): 58-71.

I The new constitution

In 1941 celebrations were held throughout Sarawak to celebrate a century of Brooke rule in the state and, in conjunction with the centenary, a Constitution was drawn up by the Rajah and his advisors. This Constitution had embodied in it what were known as the Nine Principles and two of these Principles were as follows: -

1. "That Sarawak is the heritage of our Subjects and is held in trust by Ourselves for them: and
2. "That the goal of self-government shall always be kept in mind; that the people of Sarawak shall be entrusted in due course with the governance of themselves and that continuous efforts will be made to hasten the reaching of this goal by educating them in the obligations, the responsibilities and the privileges of citizenship."

Although the Constitution did little to lessen the autocratic rule of the Brookes, it did at least go a little way in providing a means by which the Natives of Sarawak could eventually become masters of their own destinies.

However, at this stage, little if any real thought had been given to the question of the Brookes withdrawing from the Sarawak scene and handing over their powers to the people of Sarawak.

Before the effects of the new Constitution could be felt however, the Japanese Imperial Forces invaded Sarawak and Brooke rule, for a time at least, came to a sudden and preemptory halt.

Rajah Vyner Brooke spent the first period of the Japanese occupation of Sarawak in Australia before going on to England to wait out the occupation

and it was in 1944 that the British government approached him with a proposal to review the existing Treaty of Relationship between Sarawak and Great Britain.

Britain interfered

It was the intention of the British to gain a more influential say in the internal affairs of Sarawak over which, at that time, they had no control whatsoever, the Treaty of 1888 explicitly stating that the British government had no right to 'interfere with the internal administration of the State'.

When first asked that the Treaty of Relationship be reviewed, the Rajah replied that it did not seem right that negotiations should take place when the state was occupied by the Japanese as it deprived the people of Sarawak an opportunity to voice their opinions on any changes that might come about. The Rajah also stated, with what turned out to be prophetic vision, that "I have given this matter much thought, and I am convinced that if I were to enter into a fresh agreement my right to do so would almost certainly be challenged with embarrassing results to myself and possibly to His Majesty's Government."

Later, however, the Rajah became more amenable and passed the request to the Sarawak Provisional Government, then based in England, with instructions to enter into negotiations with the British Government on the matter.

The Provisional Government dragged its feet on the matter however and this is not surprising for, heading it was Anthony Brooke, the Rajah Muda, who, as eventual successor to the Rajah, was the one person most likely to suffer if there came about any diminution of the powers of the Rajah.

The reluctance of the Provisional Government to negotiate seriously with the British Government came to the notice of Rajah Vyner, who, angry at their attitude, dismissed the members of the government and took the matter of negotiations into his own hands. Then, in late 1945, the Rajah advised the British Government that he wished to step down as Rajah and hand over the state to Britain to be ruled as a colony. The British Government readily accepted his offer and steps were immediately taken to incorporate Sarawak into the British Empire.

The seed of cession

At this point, it is worth while to look into the reasons for the Rajah's decision and to try to decide what were his actual motives in ceding the state to Britain.

The will of the Second Rajah declared that he was to be succeeded by his eldest son, Vyner, who was in turn to be succeeded by the eldest of his sons if any. In the event that Vyner had no male issue, the Raj was to go to Vyner's younger brother, Bertram.

As it turned out, Vyner did not have any sons and thus Bertram was in line to become Rajah on the death of Vyner. However, Bertram, who was only two years younger than Vyner, was not a healthy man and it was obvious that he would step aside in favour of his son, Anthony, should Vyner die, and in fact Anthony had in 1939 been declared Rajah Muda, which in effect was a declaration that he was the heir to the Raj of Sarawak.

It must have been very galling to Rajah Vyner to know that he was to be succeeded not by one of his own children (he had several daughters) but by a nephew and a nephew at that who had earned his hatred and distrust. That the Ranees was unhappy at the situation, is something no one has disputed.

According to information, the Rajah, at the behest of his wife, who was acting in cahoots with the Rajah's Private Secretary Gerald MacBryan - of whom more will be said later - had made an attempt to change the provisions of his late father's will - apparently by means of a Constitution - to permit one of his daughters to succeed him as ruler of Sarawak. However as a result of violent objections from Bertram and Anthony Brooke, the scheme was dropped. In a move to prevent the will's provisions from being changed, Anthony Brooke had gone to Singapore without first receiving permission to leave his post and for this misdemeanour he was stripped of the title of Rajah Muda, and dismissed from the Sarawak Government Service.

However, in 1944, he was reinstated as Rajah Muda and as head of the Sarawak Provisional Government. For his lack of enthusiasm in negotiating with the British over the proposed revision of the treaty terms binding Sarawak and Britain, he was once again dismissed from the service and stripped of his title. In a letter to Anthony Brooke, the Rajah said "I am deeply shocked that you should have adopted such an intransigent attitude in diplomatic negotiation" and went on to tell him that he might in future neither use the style and title of Rajah Muda nor consider that he had any right to succession.

To this decision Anthony's father, Bertram, objected. Vyner replied thus:

"After all the vilification that has gone on there can be no question of Peter (Anthony Brooke) ever succeeding me. He has had fair trials and has proved himself a failure . . ."

Not only did the Rajah vilify Anthony Brooke in private correspondence but he did so even in public. For example Vyner, speaking to members of the Supreme Council on the question of cession had this to say about Anthony Brooke: "You may be asking why my nephew Anthony Brooke who was formerly proclaimed Rajah Muda, should not succeed me as Raja. My answer is that I have given him three chances to prove his worth, and he has failed. My heir must be the King."

Prior to this, the Rajah, when he issued his proclamation advocating cession, said "You may be asking why my nephew Anthony Brooke, who was formerly proclaimed Rajah Muda, should not succeed me as Rajah. My answer is that I have no confidence that he would be a good ruler".

On another occasion he described Anthony Brooke to members of the press as a 'black sheep.'

From these accounts it becomes quite clear that Anthony Brooke had become so disliked by Vyner that Vyner was prepared to go to any lengths to prevent him from becoming Rajah. Having failed in his efforts to have his eldest daughter placed in a position whereby she could inherit the Raj of Sarawak, Vyner then went to the British to take over Sarawak from him.

Of course, such motives were not made public at the time. The reason given to the people of Sarawak by the Rajah for his decision to cede Sarawak to Britain was that Sarawak had suffered so greatly during the Japanese occupation that the Brookes on their own were not in a position to finance the huge amount of reconstruction that was necessary. In this respect it is interesting to refer to the official Sarawak Year Book for the year 1947 where details of the state's financial position are set out. The Year Book shows that for nine months of 1946 there were a deficit of \$477,301 while the original estimates for 1947 were: -

Revenue: \$6,490,870
 Expenditure: \$11,097,356.
 Deficit: \$4,606,486.

Later however these figures were revised as follows: -

Revenue: \$12,318,383.
 Expenditure: \$11,312,961.
 Surplus: \$1,005,422.

Thus it can be seen that the financial experts sent to Sarawak by Britain - it is assumed the people sent were experts - were nearly 100 per cent out in their calculations of Sarawak's revenue in 1947 and it is hard not to believe that there was a political aspect in the calculation of these figures, the intention, obviously, being to show how 'bankrupt' Sarawak was.

It is interesting too, to report that the Rajah, on his final farewell visit to Simang-gang, is reported to have told Tuan Haji Su'aut Tahir, a strong anti-cessionist, that the state had to be handed over to Britain because the Australian Army had a 'bill' of many millions which had to be paid for 'services rendered' in liberating the state from the Japanese. On hearing this, Tuan Haji Su'aut asked why China, which had received more aid from the Americans than Sarawak had from the Australians, was not being taken over by the U.S. The Rajah's reply has not been recorded for posterity.

The Rajah and the British Government, having decided that Sarawak should be ceded to Britain, took swift and immediate steps to see the cession through but before these steps are outlined, it is worthwhile to digress a little and study the character of one of the principal figures in the events leading

to the cession of Sarawak to Britain. The name of this person is Gerald MacBryan.

Gerald MacBryan

Gerald MacBryan, who first began serving in Sarawak in 1920, is generally acknowledged to have been little short of brilliant. However, in many cases, the line dividing brilliance from insanity is very narrow and MacBryan was no exception. He is reported to have become temporarily insane on a number of occasions only to regain his sanity after a short period and become once again, his usual brilliant self. He was a man with tremendous ambitions and was ruthless enough to do all he could to achieve his own ends. While serving in the Sarawak Government he had conceived the idea of becoming the leader of all Muslims throughout the world and of uniting them together into one immensely powerful force.

He converted to Islam, married a local Malay woman and went on pilgrimage to Mecca. While in Saudi Arabia he arranged to meet Ibn Saud, then ruler of Saudi Arabia, with hopes of somehow ingratiating himself with the King and through him, gaining control of all Muslims throughout the world. His scheme fell through, not surprisingly, and he once again returned to Sarawak, where he eventually became Private Secretary to the Rajah.

While serving in this position he once again dreamed up another grandiose scheme of attaining the riches and power he was so anxious to acquire. His scheme, this time, was to marry Leonora, the eldest daughter of Vyner, and then somehow have the will of the Second Rajah, Charles, overruled to permit Leonora to succeed her father as ruler of Sarawak. The will of Charles, it will be remembered, expressly forbade that a woman should become Ruler of Sarawak.

Unfortunately, details of the manoeuvres indulged in by MacBryan are scarce as most of the papers relating to this period of Sarawak's history are missing. The papers, in the opinion of an official of the Sarawak Museum, were probably removed by MacBryan when he visited Sarawak shortly after the liberation.

However, it appears that what MacBryan intended to do was to get the Rajah to draw up a Constitution which would have the effect of being the principal document relating to the affairs of Sarawak thus over-ruling the will of Charles. If this scheme had worked, MacBryan, as husband of the eldest daughter of Vyner, would thus find himself with all the glory, riches and power he had ever desired for (he would be another Duke of Edinburgh, as one anti-cessionist put it!)

Fortunately for Sarawak, the scheme failed, apparently as a result of objections from Bertram and Anthony Brooke who were no doubt well aware of the conniving nature of MacBryan.

Still, cunning and ambitious as he was, MacBryan had the full trust of the

Rajah, although he had been dismissed from the service on several occasions, and he was sent by Vyner to Sarawak a few months after the liberation to obtain the support of local leaders for Vyner's proposal to cede the state to Britain, a proposal which had not at that time been made public.

MacBryan's methods were unfortunate to say the least, and caused a great deal of resentment later on. The method he chose was to go to each of the Datus and ask them to sign a letter which apparently reads as follows:—

'We hereby affirm and declare our complete confidence in the judgement and sagacity of Your Highness and our unreserved support for whatever measures Your Highness determines to pursue since we know full well that the paramount interest of Your Highness is the welfare of all the people of all the races dwelling in the state'.

Whether the Datus who signed the letters knew the purpose for which the letters were to be used is not clear, but at least one Datu, the Datu Patinggi, was not told the truth. He had been told by MacBryan that unless the letter was signed, the Rajah would be unable or unwilling to return to the state, and it was on this understanding that he signed the letter under pressure from MacBryan and the other Datus. He was then given a sum of \$12,000 while the other Datus received \$10,000 each. However, the Datu Patinggi returned his money to the military officials at that time governing the state saying he considered the money to have been a bribe. Later the Rajah denied the money paid to the various Datus were bribes. The payments, he said, represented allowances due to them for the period Sarawak had been occupied by the Japanese.

Having received the signatures he had been sent to collect, MacBryan returned to England, apparently never again to return to Sarawak. He is said to have died (or to have been murdered) in Hong Kong in 1952.

The Cession Bill

It appears that the signatures thus obtained were to have been used as proof of the willingness of the people of Sarawak to be absorbed into the British Empire but as a result of public outcries from Bertram and Anthony Brooke, doubts were cast on their validity and it was thus deemed necessary for a Cession Bill to be passed through the Council Negeri before Britain could accept the state as a colony without being accused of having done things in a secret and sinister manner.

Even passing a Bill through Council Negeri did not help much for the manner in which the Bill was rushed through was to draw heavy criticism from several quarters including the anti-cessionists themselves.

In the first place, two European members of the Council Negeri who were known to be opposed to cession were kept out of the way — one by being prematurely retired off and the other by being told to remain in Australia where he was recuperating from illness, until the end of May, by which time

the voting on the Cession Bill would have been completed. Other European members of the Council Negri were spoken to by a senior government official and were left in no doubt as to how they were expected to vote. Not only that but some of the Native members had been told that the cession proposal had the support of Bertram Brooke when this of course was not true. Apart from this, the Rajah and Raneé on several occasions, made public statements that they intended to return to Sarawak every year as was their custom and be available to the people if the need arose. For example, the Rajah said to the Supreme Council on 24 April:

"You have always trusted me and I have always trusted you for a period of nearly 50 years. I am not going to betray you now. There will be no change in my customary visits to Sarawak every year. I am not abandoning Sarawak". A few days earlier the Raneé had said: "Sarawak is a part of us and whether the cession goes through or not we will continue to pay yearly visits here as usual".

That these statements were voiced merely to overcome the doubts of the anti-cessionists is now abundantly clear. Neither the Rajah nor the Raneé ever returned to Sarawak.

In the Council Negri itself, no effort was made to translate speeches and thus most of the Native members were unable to follow the proceedings fully. Besides that, the President of the Council Negri made no effort whatsoever to take an unbiased line on the issue. In fact he three times made strong appeals to members to vote in favour of cession.

Prior to the Council Negri meeting, one Native member had been so misled by officials that he had originally scconded the Cession Bill only to vote against it later on when he came to learn that he had been misled.

The person to move the Cession Bill was the Datu Pahlawan, later to become Datu Bandar. In his speech advocating cession he had this to say: "It is my desire to declare that my forefathers and I have been honoured as Datus and I see no reason why I should seek the end of Brooke rule; but for the good of the people, I must support and agree to the proposal of His Highness to cede Sarawak to His Majesty's Government. I therefore move that I am in favour of and am pressing for cession."

Opposition to cession

The Datu Patinggi, on the other hand, was the leader of those opposed to cession and he had this to say on the Cession Bill: "I, Datu Patinggi, the hereditary Datu and representative of the indigenous people of Sarawak, hereby make known our opinion about the question of cession which are clarified as follows:

"The cession of Sarawak to the British Government cannot be agreed to by me and the people. This decision would deprive the Rajah of his Throne. Those who agree to the cession we consider to be very bad, which means that

they do not really love the Rajah, and it is a great disloyalty to the Rajah, because it means abdication and that they do not value the good service of the Brooke Rajahs and the independence of Sarawak.

"I, as the Chief and representative of the people according to the custom of the country for generations past, having sworn to look after the dignities of the Rajah and his people, must reject this cession.

"And if I agree to the cession I will be going against the oath which I made before the people and against the will of the late Rajah as well as the Constitution of 1941, and break the line of heirs to the Raj and wishes of the people, and because of this my good service extending to 62 years will be in vain, and it is also a great sin against the Almighty God which will give me no peace in this world and hereafter, and also my act of injustice will be written by historians in different parts of the world. Because I am an old man, I do not want therefore, a bad name in this world and hereafter.

"I and the people of Sarawak believe that peace, prosperity and independence of Sarawak must be under the rule of Brooke Rajahs and their heirs, under the protection of Great Britain, but not in the hands of the British, as evidenced by the Brooke rule of the past 100 years.

"In conclusion I faithfully submit what I have said above in order to maintain the dignities of the Rajah and the people. I and the people love the independence of the country, the land of my blood and love the justice of the Rajahs of the Brooke family. I earnestly beseech that the Rajah and the Tuan Muda to consider this with true justice."

(After the cession, Datu Patinggi refused to take an oath of allegiance to the new government and never resumed his seat on the Supreme Council).

In all, the debates were spread over three days from the 15th to the 17th of May, 1946, when the Bill was finally passed.

The voting was 19 in favour and 15 against cession, but had the European votes been ignored (as the anti-cessionists had been promised would be done) the Cession Bill would have been defeated.

Four days later, on the 21st May, 1946, the Instrument of Cession was signed at the Astana by the Rajah and the Chief Secretary, Mr. C. W. Dawson who signed on behalf of the King. One noticeable absentee at the signing ceremony was Datu Patinggi. Two hours after the signing of the Instrument of Cession, the Rajah and Raneé left the State by plane, never again to return to the land they had for so long ruled.

Sarawak colonised

On the 26th of the next month the King signed the Sarawak Cession Order in Council and from 1st July, 1946 Sarawak lost its independence and became a colony of Great Britain.

Criticism of the way in which the cession was pushed through has been virtually unanimous. Few if any historians writing about Sarawak have been

able to approve of the manner in which Sarawak was ceded to Great Britain. For example Runciman, in his book 'The White Rajahs' said: 'The cession had been hurriedly and clumsily handled' while Tom Harrison, writing in *The Times* of London said 'the manner of cession was hasty and crude.'

And it was largely because of the questionable way in which Sarawak became a colony that so much trouble was to arise later.

II

The first public statement of the Rajah's intention of ceding Sarawak to Great Britain was in a proclamation issued on 6th February, 1946. Two days later, the Malay National Union sent a telegram to Bertram Brooke asking him if he had been consulted on the proposed cession and if so, whether he agreed to it. The reply received was that he had not been consulted and had not given his approval to the proposed cession. It was from this time that the anti-cession movement began its activities. It is worth pointing out here that, by not consulting his brother, the Rajah had gone against the will of his father which said: 'No material development or changes in the state or in the government thereof . . . shall be initiated by my son Vyner without first consulting with my son Bertram'. This will the Third Rajah, Vyner, had sworn to uphold and obey when he took his oath of office as Rajah. When reminded of the provisions of his father's will, Vyner had this to say: 'It is what a Rajah does in a lifetime that counts – not what he would like others to do after him.'

The Rajah and his wife arrived in Sarawak in the second half of April, 1946 to be greeted by a throng of demonstrators calling for the continuation of Brooke rule and a few weeks later two Parliamentary delegates received a similar welcome when they arrived to assess the views of local people towards cession.

The Datu Patinggi, as head of the Malay National Union, attended a meeting called by the delegates and spoke vehemently against cession and said that without the consent of the natives of Sarawak, the cession would be illegal. However, the efforts of the Datu Patinggi and others who spoke against the cession proposal were unsuccessful and the two delegates reported back to the British Houses of Parliament that they considered the proposed cession was favoured by the majority of the people of Sarawak.

Having failed at this time, and later in the Council Negri to stop the cession of Sarawak to Great Britain, the anti-cession movement, rather than disappearing, continued its struggle and over the next few years it grew stronger and stronger until eventually the various anti-cession organisations could claim to have no less than 35,000 members while a pro-cessionist movement, the Young Malay Party is alleged – albeit by their opponents – to have never more than 2000 members.

Anti-cessionist rallies

The methods by which the anti-cessionist ventilated their views were varied but one of their favourite methods was the holding of rallies in all major towns throughout the state, particularly on July 1st which had been set aside as a public holiday by the Colonial regime to enable the people to 'celebrate' their newly acquired colonial status.

Thousands of people would attend these rallies and it is claimed that at the Central Padang in Kuching alone, there would be as many as 15,000 people there to demonstrate their opposition to British rule. At these rallies posters were displayed proclaiming 'We want Brooke rule'; 'We want Sarawak's independence restored'; 'Sarawak cession is illegal' and so on and so forth in a similar vein. Usually the number of people at these rallies would be heavily underestimated by the local press and this would draw forth letters of protest from the organisers of the rally. In fact, throughout the years letters on the cession of Sarawak appeared regularly in the local newspapers for each of the organisations had well organised publicity sections. When Utusan Sarawak was formed in 1949 its first editor was a strong anti-cessionist and the paper made no effort to hide its feelings on the question of cession.

The government at first claimed that only a small and noisy minority were opposed to cession and this may have been true in the beginning, but as time went by, more and more people were converted to the anti-cessionists' way of thinking, thanks to the tireless efforts of various anti-cessionist stalwarts who travelled from kampong to kampong throughout the state explaining their position and views and enlisting more and more members into their organisations. Eventually, it is claimed, every single kampong in the state had a branch of the main anti-cessionist organisation - the Malay National Union.

By far the greater majority of the anti-cessionists were Malays but there were also a number of Ibans and also Chinese although of the latter race there were probably no more than 20 in the anticeSSION movement - all of them local-born.

Circular No. 9

The majority of the leaders of the anti-cession movement were either school teachers or government servants and, in an effort to curb their activities, which were proving to be very embarrassing to the government, a circular, the now notorious Secretariat Circular No.9/1946, was sent to all government officers. The circular reads as follows: -

- (a) Government expects and requires absolute loyalty from all its servants.
- (b) Since there is no question of any change in the present regime or any reversion to Brooke rule, Government will not permit or tolerate any

association by its servants with any activities designed to keep alive the question of cession.

(c) There will be no victimisation for any speech or act of any Government servant in the past relating to the question of cession but each government servant must now make up his mind whether he wishes to serve the present government loyally and faithfully or not.

(d) If you do not feel that you wish to continue in the Government service under these conditions, you should inform your Resident, District Officer or Head of Department, as the case may be, before 31st December, 1946, and he will advise you on the course you should pursue.

(e) Any Government servant in future who associates himself with any activity designed to keep open the question of cession or who commits any act of deliberate disloyalty to Government will render himself liable to instant dismissal.

It appears obvious that the purpose of this circular was to cow into submission those public servants who were active in the anti-cession movement and to force them to cease their activities. Unfortunately for the government however, its plan back-fired miserably. No less than 338 teachers and government servants resigned from the service rather than submit to the demands made in Circular No. 9 and it is said that many others were at first prepared to resign but later backed down.

The Governor, speaking in Council Negri in December, 1947, had this to say about the resignations: "Anti-cession feeling has been particularly strong among Malay school-teachers, most of whom have been recruited and trained in Kuching. This led to the mass resignation of 87 out of 152 Malay teachers in April (1947) and the closure of 22 out of 62 Government Malay Schools.

"In December last (1946) all government servants on the Establishment were asked whether, in view of the change in the status of Sarawak to that of a Crown Colony, they were prepared to give loyal service to the new Government or wished to resign on conscientious grounds. Approximately 13 per cent of the Government staff resigned: all of them were Malays (in fact there were three non-Malays) and 90 per cent were stationed in Kuching."

This was not the only time the Government found itself in an embarrassing position as a result of its ham-fisted approach to the question of dealing with the anti-cessionists. In December, 1946 Anthony Brooke had been declared an undesirable person and forbidden to enter the state. There were immediate outcries from the anti-cessionists and from some Malayan and British newspapers who deplored what they considered to have been a foolish move. The reason given for the ban was that Anthony Brooke's presence in the state could possibly inflame his followers into doing something foolish or illegal. Anthony Brooke had been told that "your presence would raise false hopes amongst the small minority who are your adherents and would excite activities which probably would cause disturbance of the peace between

them and members of the public." It was not until the assassination of the then Governor, Duncan Stewart in December, 1949, that the wisdom of the ban became apparent, but before that incident occurred the government found itself strongly criticised for imposing the ban.

No welcome for British Governor

Sarawak, noted for its hospitality to visitors, did not win any prizes for the reception given to the first Colonial Governor. Sir Charles Arden Clarke, when he arrived in Kuching on 29 October, 1946, for his installation as Governor. Following are extracts from a letter which was delivered to him on his arrival. The letter was sent by the Malay National Union and was signed by the Datu Patinggi and Abang Haji Zaini, father of Dato Abang Ikhwan Zaini.

'Rajah Sir Charles Vyner Brooke . . . has sought to cede Sarawak to the British crown.

' . . . there was no justice in this act, which constituted a breach of faith with the people. Furthermore Sir Charles Vyner Brooke had no power whatsoever to offer cession . . .

'The acceptance of his Majesty's Government . . . is not valid, and such an act is not only inconsistent with the Constitution but is also a breach of international law.

'The indigenous people throughout the entire country reject this act of cession and no matter how many council meetings may be held and no matter what other means may be employed, the people will remain adamant in their attitude and will never agree to cession. The vote of the native community at the State Council meeting recently held to discuss the cession proposal accurately reflected the attitude of the people, that is to say, the cession was not agreed to by the majority of the people.

'We respectfully request Your Excellency to convey to His Majesty's Government an expression of the wishes of the indigenous people and of their opposition to cession . . . and that they will bring the matter to the notice of His Majesty the King so that he may revoke the cession . . . and that His Majesty hereby restore to Sarawak the independence it enjoyed hitherto under the protection of the British Government. The right of succession to the Raj of Sarawak, in accordance with the wishes of the people of the country to whom it indisputably belongs, is vested in the heirs of the Brooke family, that is to say, His Highness the Tuan Muda, Bertram Brooke, and his son the Rajah Muda, Anthony Brooke.'

To this letter, the then Chief Secretary gave the following condescending reply: -

'Your union is not yet sufficiently informed and cognizant of what caused the Rajah to envisage the cession of Sarawak to His Majesty the King and His Highness instructs me to explain.

'His Highness is of the opinion that a small state like Sarawak cannot exist by itself, even under British protection.

'... trade has almost gone, reserves of revenue are almost lost, public works ... are held up.

'In these circumstances thought must be given to the future, in order to escape bankruptcy and suspense. The best we can hope for is to get financial and other aid by placing ourselves under British direction ...

'This letter is written in the hope that you will all trust the Rajah in this last step and be confident that it is for your own good.'

But the anti-cessionists did not trust the Rajah. They had seen for themselves that he had chosen to ignore their opinions and those of his brother and nephew and that he was not above lying in his efforts to push through the cession of Sarawak.

And so the battle to have the cession of Sarawak annulled continued. Throughout the length and breadth of Sarawak the anti-cessionists travelled, telling the people about Sarawak's loss of independence, about the absence of a Rajah to whom they could appeal for justice and about the need - as they saw it - for Brooke rule to be restored if ever Sarawak was to be given the independence they had been promised in 1941.

Assassination of a governor

The anti-cessionists prided themselves on the fact that all their protests and rallies were lawful and within the Constitution and it was a bitter and deadly blow to their hopes when, on 3rd December, 1949, two anti-cessionists attacked the then Governor, Mr. Duncan Stewart, an attack which resulted in his death a week later in Singapore.

Government reaction to the attack was swift and thorough. The two men who had attacked the Governor were arrested on the spot and within a month of the Governor's death they had been tried, convicted and sentenced to death. (The speed with which they were dealt with by the Court was largely due to the fact that both the accused eventually pleaded guilty to the charges laid against them.)

The Colonial Government, with a strong display of vindictiveness, was not content with having two persons sentenced to death and a month later, in February, 1950, the trial of 10 persons charged with abetting the murder of the Governor and alternatively with conspiracy to murder the Governor, opened in Sibü.

At the trial it was revealed that the accused men had belonged to an organisation known as 'Rukun Tiga-belas', the objectives of which were to (1) kill the Governor, the Resident, Third Division, other British officials and elderly Malays supporting the British and (2) to spread propaganda among the Malay youths to persuade them to join the killings.

Of the 10 charged, one was acquitted while the remainder were convicted

and sentenced to death but with mercy recommended for seven of them. Thus for the death of the Governor, four men were hung and seven others spent periods of 12 years or so in prison. One of the men sent to prison had taken part in the plotting of the Governor's death but this was a year before the assassination took place. He had gone to Brunei, as had so many other anti-cessionists, and was in fact in Brunei when the Governor was killed but this did not prevent the authorities from bringing him back to Sibü to face trial.

The effect on the anti-cession movement of this assassination was disastrous. The killing was completely out of character with the hitherto-law-abiding anti-cession movement. 'We didn't want to do anything of that sort. We wanted to act in an approved way,' or 'we were shocked,' or 'we always carried out our campaign within the constitution,' were some of the comments of former anti-cessionists when asked about their reactions to the assassination.

Crack-down on anti-cessionists

The assassination proved an ideal excuse for the authorities to crack down on the anti-cession movement and the houses of leading anti-cessionists were ransacked by police parties who took away anything they could lay their hands on. These police searches were not confined to Sarawak alone. In Brunei, a number of Sarawak people had their houses searched and several were detained for questioning. At this time a number of anti-cessionists found it prudent to leave for Indonesia and a number of them are still there today.

It is said that at the time of the assassination, the authorities were apprehensive that a full-scale outbreak was about to occur and orders were sent to longhouses in the Third Division instructing a number of Penghulus to 'visit' Sibü with some of their warriors to act as a deterrent to any would-be rebels amongst the Malay community. Such an outbreak never occurred of course, as the assassination had been planned and undertaken by a group of only 11 persons all of whom were swiftly dealt with by the authorities.

This, incidentally, was not the first time strong-arm tactics had been used in an effort to cow the anti-cessionists into submission and silence. In 1947, shortly after the mass exodus of anti-cessionist government servants from the service, three persons, considered to be ring-leaders of the movement, were taken into custody by the police. They were alleged to have participated in an unlawful assembly but the surviving members of this trio deny having ever taken part in any parade or demonstration at any time. The three, all former government servants, were taken to Fort Margarita where they were stripped to their underpants and left for two days without food. The three were confined to the fort for more than a month, each of them in solitary confinement. They were given neither mattresses nor blankets and were let

out of their cells for only a short time each day. Of these three men, one has since died, another is a businessman and the third has rejoined government service and is at the time of writing serving in the Forests Department.

This colonial crack-down on the anti-cessionist movement and the constant police surveillance on anti-cessionists leader, caused the movement to lose a great deal of its strength and vitality.

The movement managed to struggle along however, though on a much reduced scale, until what was probably the final blow was struck. This was a telegram from Anthony Brooke, who prior to this had been giving the anti-cessionists his active and outspoken support. However, in 1951, fearing he would be publicly branded as a traitor to Britain, and concerned about the growing threat of communism to world peace, he sent a message to each of the anti-cessionist movements in Sarawak urging them to give up their fight against British rule in Sarawak.

Naturally enough, this appeal was heeded by all but the die-hards in the anti-cession movement and so the movement once again found itself losing a large number of its supporters. Still, even Anthony Brooke's request did not close the anti-cession controversy although it had the effect of weakening and reducing the anti-cession movement considerably.

The stalwarts of the anti-cession movement found it a little hard to agree with Anthony Brooke's request and they sent him the following reply: –

'We have received Your Highness's decision to withdraw from the Sarawak Cession controversy with deep regret in as much as we sincerely believe that the cause of a united Sarawak now and in future years can be best served by the recognition on the part of His Majesty's Government that we do not want to be a colony but an independent state under the constitutional rule of Brooke Rajahs within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

'We regret we do not feel able to accede to your request, even temporarily, to abandon these aims, but with this reservation we shall most willingly do everything within our power to play an active and constructive role in cooperation with the Sarawak Government and all communities.'

These were brave fighting words but in fact, with Anthony Brooke's announcement that he was no longer pressing for the annulment of the Cession Bill, the bottom fell out of the anti-cession movement in Sarawak and it gradually withered away.

Conclusion

It has been a common misconception, which still persists today, that the anti-cessionists, most of whom were Malays, were opposed to the cession of Sarawak to Great Britain because they were afraid their community would lose the special privileges held by them under the Brooke Rajahs. One University professor had this to say about the anti-cession movement: 'It could be concluded that the anti-cession movement was in no sense a national or

nationalistic struggle fighting to regain "lost independence." It was a measure of self-preservation by a long-privileged class coupled with a certain amount of reaction arising out of innate conservatism campaigned under the banner of loyalty to the Rajah, to regain independence and liberty.'

These comments can be dismissed as being totally incorrect. If, as the professor says, the fight was to protect their special privileges, then why did the anti-cessionists give up their so-called privileges – which consisted of little more than preference for government jobs – in their efforts to reverse the cession of Sarawak? Obviously, if these people were intent on protecting their 'special privileges', then the way in which they would have done so would have been by ingratiating themselves with their new masters. Instead, they struggled against the new regime and threw away their 'special privileges' – government employment – rather than give in to the government's demand that they cease protesting against cession. Hardly a sign of 'innate conservatism' this.

Another point the professor infers is that the oft-expressed desire of the anti-cessionists to regain independence for Sarawak was merely a cover for their real motives. This is far from the truth. The anti-cessionists, although they did not always make it clear, were primarily fighting for Sarawak to regain its independence. They were well aware of two of the Cardinal Principles contained in the Constitution of 1941 which have already been quoted. Briefly, these two Principles said that Sarawak belonged to the Natives and that the Brookes pledged themselves to help the Natives gain sufficient knowledge to be capable of ruling themselves and to hand over power when that eventually came about.

Vyner Brooke, in 1941, promised Sarawak self-rule and then turned Sarawak into a Colony in 1946. This primarily was what got the anti-cessionists so steamed up.

All anti-cessionists spoken to by this writer expressed pride in the fact that Sarawak had many years before been recognised as a sovereign and independent state by both the United States and later Great Britain. Then, in 1945–46, at a time when so many former colonies were gaining their independence, here was poor little Sarawak going from independent state to colony.

The anti-cessionists in their time were berated by all and sundry and the government of the time did all it could to smear the name of the movement. The Sarawak Gazette, for example, (in its issue of April 1947) inferred that the anti-cessionists used pressure to get others to follow their way. The Gazette claimed that many of the 338 officers who resigned from Government service did so only because pressure had been put on them to do so. However, several present-day Government officers who were serving at the time of the resignations, but who did not themselves resign, were unable to recollect any cases of officers being pressured to resign. In fact, the exact opposite was true. Many of those who resigned said efforts had been exerted by European

officers to dissuade them from resigning and had it not been for this pressure from the government, there would have been an even greater exodus of Government servants from the service. The anti-cessionists say that originally a majority of the Government servants intended to resign rather than comply with Circular No. 9/46, but in the end only 13 per cent of the Government servants resigned thanks to the efforts of the European officers'.

Another criticism of the anti-cessionists was that they split the Malay community into two opposing camps. However this criticism cannot hold good because obviously it takes two to make a fight. The split in the Malay community was not caused because there was a group of persons opposed to cession. Rather, the split was caused because there was one group in favour of cession and one group opposed to cession.

The Chief Minister, Dato Haji Abdul Rahman Ya'kub, a few months ago, described the anti-cession movement as perhaps the first nationalistic movement in Sarawak, a comment which prompted the writing of this article.

If only a superficial study was made of the anti-cession movement, the tendency would be for one to disagree with this comment on the grounds that the anti-cessionists were fighting not for self-rule but for the retention of Brooke rule. A careful examination of the movement's aims will however bear out the Chief Minister's statement. Admittedly the anti-cessionists did their best to retain Brooke rule in Sarawak and this does not appear to be a nationalistic thing to do. But in fact, the reason these people were so anxious to have the Brooke remain in Sarawak was that the Brookes had promised Sarawak eventual self-rule and the anti-cessionists wanted them to stay in Sarawak so that they could keep that promise. This is not to say however, that the Brookes were not wanted in Sarawak. There was a great love and respect for the Brooke family in Sarawak, especially among the Natives and many were unhappy with the thought that the Brookes would no longer be in Sarawak. It was because of this that Rajah Vyner and the Ranees, on several occasions, assured the people that they would continue to visit Sarawak after the cession.

Looking back, it can be fairly said that it was better for Sarawak that the anti-cessionists failed in their aim to restore Brooke rule for it is doubtful that the Brookes would have given up their authority as willingly as did the British. And although the British did precious little for Sarawak in the way of development, the fact remains that they did more than the Brookes would have been able to accomplish.

This is not to say that the anti-cessionists wasted their time and energy in opposing the colonialisation of Sarawak. It can be said with confidence that one of the reasons which prompted Britain to so whole-heartedly support Malaysia – in as far as Sarawak was concerned – was because they had been made to feel so unwelcome by the anti-cession movement. It could therefore be said that the anti-cessionists played an important role in bringing about the formation of Malaysia.

Another beneficial result of the anti-cession movement was that it woke the people of Sarawak up to the importance of, and the need to participate in politics and a number anti-cessionists went on to become politicians at either Federal or State level or both. Among these are Che Ajibah Abol, Dato Abang Ikhwan Zaini; Tuah Haji Mohd. Su'at Tahir; Abdul Kadir Marican; Aknee bin Taip and Tuan Haji Dawi bin Abdul Rahman.

Politics is not the only field in which the anti-cessionists have proved successful. Many of the teachers who resigned from Government service in 1947 and later returned to government service, went on to become headmasters while many Government servants rose to high positions on their return to the service. Others have become successful businessmen.

These few examples are more than sufficient to show that those who opposed cession were not the 'crackpots' they were made out to be but in fact highly intelligent and articulate people.

They were also very dedicated people, prepared to back up their beliefs with action – thus the mass resignation from the Government service, a move which caused hardship to all of them and which impoverished many. Quite a number of the anti-cessionists had to sell their land or other property to stay alive and most of them had to take labouring jobs to provide themselves with a source of income.

But perhaps the most outstanding achievement of the anti-cessionists was their forming of the Sekolah Ra'ayats. When the Malay teachers resigned from Government service, the Government was forced to close 22 of its Government Malay Schools and the subsequent difficulties Malay children had in getting a place in one of the remaining schools was blamed on the anti-cessionists. To overcome this criticism, the anti-cessionists set up four schools in Kuching and at least one in Sibu. The schools formed in Kuching included one for girls but this was closed after a few months. Two other schools set up in Kuching were at Jalan Haji Bolhassan and Kampong Tupong and both are still in existence. The fourth school was at Kampong Panglima Seman but it closed after three years. Later the same people formed a secondary school – Sekolah Menengah Tunku Abdul Rahman – and this school is still doing well.

None of these schools were ever in a strong financial position and they were able to remain open only because the teachers serving in them were prepared to do so without wages. In order to keep themselves alive, these teachers were forced to take part-time jobs and, once a year, concerts were held to raise funds and the proceeds were shared amongst the teachers in lieu of wages. Some of the teachers received as little as \$1.80 for one year service and this is typical of the sacrifices the anti-cessionists were prepared to make rather than to compromise their beliefs. The Government often tried to induce the former Government servants to return to their jobs but the majority refused. It was only after Anthony Brooke announced his intention of giving up his fight to have Sarawak restored to the Brookes, that

the ex-Government servants began to rejoin Government service in any appreciable numbers.

Finally, it can be said that the anti-cessionists deserve the admiration of all people in Sarawak for the way in which they fought their battle. We need not necessarily agree with the principles for which they fought but the fact remains that they did a lot for Sarawak, first by letting the British know that Sarawak wanted its independence and secondly by awakening the political consciousness of the people. Their dedication to their cause was deep and strong and at all times they were fighting not for themselves but for what they thought was best for Sarawak. Many of them made tremendous sacrifices for their cause and it is this, more than anything they did, which deserves to be recognised and praised.

MALAYSIA

THE TROUBLED BIRTH OF MALAYSIA

Hamilton Fish Armstrong

Source: *Foreign Affairs* 41(4) (1963): 673-93.

The Federation of Malaysia is scheduled to come into existence on August 31 of this year by the merger of the existing Federation of Malaya with Singapore, the British colonies of Sarawak and North Borneo and the British-protected Sultanate of Brunei, thus forming a crescent well over a thousand miles long from the borders of Thailand almost to within eyesight of the southernmost Philippine islands. Although many difficulties stand in the way, the British and Malayan Governments say categorically that they will not be deterred from pushing the plan through. Some of the difficulties are historical and local, for the new Federation will be a rather arbitrary assemblage of widely separated territories with mixed populations at different stages of development. More important are the objections raised by Indonesia and the Philippines.

President Sukarno of Indonesia condemns Malaysia as a colonialist project because it will have a British defense guarantee; he sees no inconsistency, however, in criticizing it in the same breath as so weak that it will open the way for the southward march of Communist China. The Philippines began by taking the same position; but because its history gives it a different outlook on the relations of independent states with former colonial powers, it decided on second thought not to stress the criticism of Malaysia as a device to prolong colonialism. However, it joins Indonesia in claiming that China will find easier pickings in a Malaysian federation than it would if the component territories remained separate bits of real estate with an uncertain future. What they would like that future to be is not much of a secret. An agitation is being carried on in Indonesia, without official hindrance, for self-determination of the British territories as a halfway house towards their inclusion in Indonesia; and the Philippine Government has put forward a claim to residual sovereignty in a part of

North Borneo, based on a complicated chain of inheritances from the last Sultan of Sulu.

This controversy has brought new uncertainties to the tense situation already existing in South East Asia and given it a sharp new focus in world politics. The conflict is particularly acute between Indonesia and Malaya. They are the two nations of the area which are most closely related in race, language, customs and religion. But they have had very different colonial experiences, attained independence in different ways, pursued different political and social goals by radically different methods and are led by statesmen of different training, experience and temperament, looking at the outside world with different eyes and seeking support there in opposing camps.

No such differences exist between the Philippines and Malaya. Both are democratically organized; both secured their independence with the consent of the colonial power; both belong, with Thailand, to the Association of South East Asian states (A.S.A.) and have been negotiating for closer cultural and commercial ties. For this reason, the Philippine Government has avoided using the invective and open threats that mark the Indonesian attacks on Malaysia, and recently President Macapagal has tended to serve as mediator between the leaders of the two other countries. Apparently the main reason the Philippines joined Indonesia in opposing Malaysia was to exert pressure on Britain to recognize its claim in North Borneo, or at any rate to ensure that the claim will be considered seriously and settled by a legal procedure, preferably in the International Court of Justice. For when President Macapagal first raised the matter formally in May 1962, Britain brushed it aside as so insubstantial as to be hardly worth discussing. Last November President Sukarno of Indonesia, passing through Manila on his way home from Japan, had a talk with President Macapagal. The two Presidents seem to have reached an understanding that the Philippines would make common cause with Indonesia in opposing Malaysia and that in return Indonesia would support Philippine ambitions in North Borneo. (Interestingly enough, although some of the territory included in the Philippine claim lies within Indonesia, nothing is now heard of that part of it.) They doubtless were encouraged by the disorders in Brunei in early December which revealed that the proposed Federation faced internal difficulties. President Sukarno immediately gave the revolt his blessing and proclaimed his "confrontation" policy against Malaya—a word imprecise in the context but obviously intended to be threatening.

Now there are understandable reasons why the Philippines should wish to identify itself with Asia, if only to show that it has a larger role to play than as an American protégé. Membership in A.S.A. was a natural step in that direction. But to jump into bed with Indonesia, particularly if it means destroying A.S.A., seems going to extremes. For partnership with President Sukarno involves risks that cannot be calculated in advance.

One thing which does seem certain about President Sukarno's plans is that

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they aim to make Indonesia the dominant power in the area. Half of the 200,000,000 people of South East Asia live under his control, compared with a population of about 28,000,000 in the Philippines and about 10,000,000 in what will be Malaysia. To back up his ambitions he has a well-trained army, enlarged to 300,000 for the projected invasion of New Guinea and still maintained at that strength, plus 125,000 Mobile Guards. Until recently, the Indonesian forces had rather miscellaneous arms—Dutch, Japanese, British, Czech and American—but these have been overshadowed by the military aid received from the Soviet Union, which now reaches the value of one billion dollars.

As first steps in his program, President Sukarno hardly disguises his belief that Indonesia should naturally include the territories now under British control in the western and northern parts of Kalimantan (the Indonesian name for Borneo), and he takes it for granted that Portuguese Timor is to be had for the taking at any convenient moment. It would be out of character if in addition he did not have his eyes on the Australian-administered half of New Guinea (though this is disclaimed, as is common form in such cases). But this is not the whole menu. A propaganda also flourishes in the Indonesian press and from Indonesian territory over the "Voice of the Unitary State of Kalimantan"—without official disapproval and therefore with official consent—favoring the concept of *Indonesia Raya* (Greater Indonesia) as a substitute for Malaysia. In it, Indonesia would absorb not only the Bornean

two-thirds majority for a proposal to merge Singapore with Malaya independently of the project for a further merger into Malaysia.¹ And in the autumn of 1962 he risked taking the merger proposal to the people of Singapore and gained their approval by a big majority. The financial terms of the merger are still under discussion, and a last-minute hitch might occur as to the division of Singapore's surplus revenue between the city state and the Federation Government. However, agreement has been reached that Singapore is to have autonomy in the critical fields of education and labor (the former of intense importance for the Chinese, the latter for everybody), and in return for this concession Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew agreed that Singapore shall have only 15 seats in the Federation Parliament, less than it would be entitled to in terms of population. Internal security will be in the hands of the Federation. The British base in Singapore will continue, and this seems to suit everybody but the most extreme Communist elements, since the support services for the base bring in a large revenue and employ more than 40,000 dockers and other workers. As this is written, the extent of British financial help in training Malaysia's enlarged defense forces is still being discussed.

Given the basic facts of the situation, the British of Malayan Governments feel that the problem of Singapore is being handled as wisely and safely as possible. If it were left a separate unit, the Communist elements among the Chinese majority might one day open the gates to an outside predator. If it were combined just with Malaya, it might play a preponderant role that it cannot play in the larger Malaysia. There remains the possibility that local disorders may occur, but the Federation Government will have authority to deal with them, and if they assumed proportions endangering international security it could call on Britain for help. Some British officials do not hesitate to say that it is not because of prospective weaknesses in Malaysia that President Sukarno fights it but because (aside from making Indonesian expansion in Borneo more difficult) it promises to stabilize a spot where the situation has been fluid and the future uncertain. Singapore will be immunized so far as practicable against a takeover by the Communists and anchored in a political base where it will be less vulnerable to the designs of an envious neighbor; the risk of racial conflict between the Chinese and Malays will continue but it will be minimized in a homogeneous economic and political structure giving scope for the abilities of the Chinese in business and finance and the talents of the Malays in politics.

III

President Sukarno has additional reasons, both foreign and domestic, for doing his best (or worst) to prevent the formation of Malaysia on schedule and, if he fails in that, for continuing efforts to sabotage it. One reason (which can hardly be shared by President Macapagal) is that since he is

himself a socialist and claims to have established a socialist régime in Indonesia he must prove its superiority to the free-enterprise régime in Malaya. But this pretense he is finding exceedingly hard to maintain, for Malaya is prosperous and the Indonesian economy is in chaos. To claim superiority for the Indonesian system would become even more difficult if the Malayan economy, based too heavily at present on two commodities, tin and rubber, were to become more diversified by the addition of the oil of Brunei, the timber, cacao, copra and bauxite of North Borneo, the timber and pepper of Sarawak, and other Bornean products, and if the whole of Malaysia became, as is suggested, a common market with a pan-Malaysia tariff, served by the great free port of Singapore.

What seem to be irreconcilable differences in temperament between President Sukarno and the Malayan Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, are another reason why the dispute between their two countries has become so intense.

President Sukarno is too often described in the American press in unflattering terms only; and his voracious love of pleasure and lack of interest in economy do lay him open to criticism. (Item: The helicopter given him by President Kennedy stands on the palace lawn at Bogor. But it is so noisy, Sukarno told me, that he is ordering another. "Besides, the wind from this machine blows the petals off the water-lilies.") But this is only one side of his character. He is in addition a man with energy to match his ambition, a demagogue of magnetic power and a politician of marvelous skill in manoeuvre. Who without that skill could cavort confidently around the circus ring, not only mounted on two horses anxious to go in different directions but guiding two other pairs of horses also?

His main team is composed of the Eastern horse and the Western horse. They pull hard against each other and it takes great dexterity on the President's part to keep his footing on each and not either land on the tanbark or find himself deserted by one of his steeds and left clinging precariously to the other.

The second team which he must somehow keep under control consists of two most incompatible horses. One, pressing hard to the right, is the Indonesian Army, led by anti-Communist General Nasution, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces; the other, pressing even harder towards the left, is the Communist Party of Indonesia (the P.K.I.), two million strong, the only effectively organized political grouping in the country.

The third team consists of the Moscow horse and the Peking horse. President Sukarno needs to continue receiving Soviet aid and he must pay increasing deference to Communist China. Mao's aggressive policy is much more popular in the P.K.I. than Khrushchev's more moderate line, and the P.K.I. is a vital element in the political structure on which Sukarno's régime rests.

The pull between Moscow and Peking may still topple him. South East Asia is—for the time being, anyway—a battleground between the Soviet

Union and Communist China; and a point of special friction is Indonesia. This was underscored this past spring when Marshal Malinovsky and the President of China, Liu Shaochi, visited Djakarta within a few weeks of each other. The Chinese President urged Sukarno to push his fight against Malaysia unremittingly and to avoid any plan for stabilizing the Indonesian economy that would require (and perhaps receive) American aid. Peking and the P.K.I. do not oppose economic and financial reform just because it would require aid from "imperialist" America; they know too it would ameliorate misery in the sprawling suburbs of the crowded cities and the *kampongs* of Java which are breeding-grounds of Communism. *Pravda* has called Malaysia a "cunning invention" of neo-colonialism, but in general Moscow's line is more moderate than Peking's. It deprecates revolutionary activity inside Indonesia at present, is satisfied that representatives of the increasingly pro-Peking P.K.I. should not be taken into Sukarno's cabinet and does not favor even an unofficial Indonesian war in Borneo. It would be to the Soviet Union's advantage if Britain were forced to transfer troops from Europe to South East Asia to deal with attacks on the former British colonies there; but Soviet leaders seem to fear that if Indonesia pushed the contest with Malaya and Britain to such extremes it might get out of hand and involve other powers, possibly even the United States.

So far, President Sukarno has been adroit enough to steer his three pairs of antagonistic horses round and round the ring without a fall and to the applause of a bedazzled audience.

By comparison with President Sukarno the Malayan Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, is staid and unpicturesque. They are as unlike in externals as they apparently are in inner motivations. Sukarno is always in uniform with half a dozen rows of decorations, his cap set at a jaunty angle, a swagger stick under his arm. The Tunku ordinarily dresses inconspicuously in a sarong or blue cotton tunic and trousers. Where Sukarno is given to hyperbole, quips and taunts, the Tunku is dignified, almost ponderous. Each can and does speak contemptuously about the other, but Sukarno's sarcasm is viperous, the Tunku's blurted out, often at undiplomatic moments, almost by inadvertence. Nobody who works for Sukarno can feel secure except by showing him fidelity verging on sycophancy; the Tunku, as one associate described him, is "sometimes bumbling but always open to reason." Each understands his own people and has a flair for manœuvre in domestic politics. In international matters Sukarno often resorts to bluff and his bluff often wins; the Tunku is less of a gambler, but once he takes a position, as on Malaysia, he is immovable. Sukarno calls himself "a man of the world's new emerging forces" and refers to the Tunku as "a man of the old status quo forces." The Tunku considers Sukarno a shallow fellow, an *arrivist* who must be ever staging some spectacle in order to hold his popularity or seeking a new political success to divert attention from his inability to organize and run the daily affairs of a modern state.

IV

Indonesian officials complain that the Malayan Government is chronically unfriendly. They say that anti-Sukarno rebels during 1957 and 1958 found refuge in Malaya and subsequently were permitted to speak over the Malaya radio in an effort to arouse discontent in nearby Sumatra. It is true that rebel bands crossed the narrow Straits of Malacca and hid in swampy islands along the Malayan coast, and that Indonesian and Malayan patrols found it impossible to control them; also that Sumitro and some other rebel leaders escaped to Singapore and eventually, when the rebellion was over, came to live in Malaya, though under strict injunctions against political activity. It is denied categorically in Kuala Lumpur that they have ever been allowed to speak over the Malaya radio. It is admitted that when Foreign Minister Subandrio asked the Malayan Government in January 1961 (some time after the rebellion ended) to sign an extradition treaty the request was not granted; Indonesia specified that the treaty should cover political offenses and Malaya considered this contrary to international practice. A furor was raised in the Indonesian press when in October 1960 the Tunku made efforts to find a compromise for the West Irian question which was unsettling the whole of South East Asia. His visits to The Hague, Washington and the United Nations were attacked in Djakarta as preposterous interference. What was not mentioned, perhaps because it was not known, was that the Tunku had corresponded with President Sukarno in advance and had been encouraged in his quest.

A specific grievance emphasized in Djakarta is that the Malayan Government does not consult Indonesia about matters of common concern. As examples of this "bad neighborhood" Dr. Subandrio gave me the failure of Malaya to inform him about the projected Association of South East Asia and later about the plans for Malaysia. The chronology of events does not seem to support this indictment.

A.S.A. was first adumbrated in a speech made by the Tunku at a dinner given by President Garcia of the Philippines in Manila on January 3, 1959. His suggestion was then rather vague, merely that as wide as possible a group of nations in South East Asia should join together to ensure their independence, stability and progress. In October of that year he wrote to the chiefs of state of all the nations that might be interested in discussing such an association. His invitations went to President Sukarno, President Garcia, Marshal Sarit of Thailand, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, President Diem of South Viet Nam, Premier Sananikone of Laos and General Ne Win of Burma. President Sukarno replied in January 1960 that he did not favor multilateral agreements but preferred bilateral ones. Only with the Philippines and Thailand did the negotiations proceed to a satisfactory conclusion.

The first mention of the project which gradually took shape as the

Federation of Malaysia was in a speech by the Tunku in Singapore, May 27, 1961. He said:

Malaya today as a nation realizes that she cannot stand alone and in isolation. . . . Sooner or later she should have an understanding with Britain and the peoples of the territories of Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak. It is premature for me to say how this closer understanding can be brought about, but it is inevitable that we should look ahead to this objective and think of a plan whereby these territories can be brought closer together in political and economic coöperation.

Two months later Malaya made the first major move to translate this idea into reality by establishing the Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee composed of leading personalities from each of the five territories (the Brunei representatives sitting as observers). They were asked to study the feasibility of the plan, develop a program of action and suggest how local interests and requirements might be reconciled. The committee held four series of meetings in the North Borneo and Sarawak capitals and in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. By autumn the discussions had progressed so well that the Tunku was encouraged to visit London for a discussion of ways and means with the British Government. On November 23 he reached agreement in principle with Prime Minister Macmillan on the advisability of creating Malaysia and, as a procedural matter, on the appointment of an Anglo-Malayan commission to inquire into the proposal on the spot and make recommendations. Lord Cobbold, former Governor of the Bank of England, was named head of the Commission, with two experienced members of the British Civil Service and two nominees of the Malayan Government as his associates.

It was at this juncture that Foreign Minister Subandrio of Indonesia intervened in the discussion of the Malaysia proposal. He was then in New York, attending the U.N. General Assembly at which the Indonesian claim to West Irian was being considered. In order to dispose of the idea that the acquisition of West Irian would be only a first step in an Indonesian program of expansion, he wrote a letter to *The New York Times*, dated November 13, 1961, citing "as an example of our honesty and lack of expansionist intent" the fact that Indonesia does "not show any objection" towards the Malayan policy of merger with the British territories in Borneo. And speaking in the General Assembly a week later, November 20, 1961, Dr. Subandrio said further:

We are not only disclaiming the territories outside the former Netherlands East Indies, though they are of the same island (Borneo), but—more than that—when Malaya told us of its

intention to merge with the three British Crown Colonies [*sic*] of Sarawak, Brunei, and North Borneo as one Federation, we told them that we had no objections and that we wished them success with this merger so that everyone might live in peace and freedom.

The friendly attitude thus expressed did not long survive.

V

The Cobbold Commission arrived on the scene in February 1962 and in the course of 50 meetings in 35 different centers throughout Sarawak and North Borneo heard the views of over 4,000 persons who appeared before it in groups varying in size from 1 to 50. It also consulted with the Legislative Councils in the two colonies and received 2,000 memoranda and letters from town boards, district councils, political parties, chambers of commerce, religious and trade-union leaders, native chiefs and others. The hearings were private and the memoranda were treated as confidential. The Commission also made use of the report of the Solidarity Consultative Committee as a guide in asking questions and seeking compromises where divergent views were expressed. The question of Brunei's accession to the Federation is separate from that of Sarawak and North Borneo, for it is run by an hereditary ruler whose decision in the matter is final. (Actually, the Sultan's negotiations with the Malayan Government have turned mainly on the division of Brunei's oil revenues.) The Commission nevertheless visited Brunei Town and had discussions with the Sultan and his Ministers. As for Singapore, its amalgamation with Malaya had already been agreed upon. The Commission's report, signed June 21, 1962, summarized the problems involved in setting up the Federation and made a series of unanimous recommendations; it also included separate recommendations by the British and Malayan members.

Prolonged negotiations followed among members of an Inter-Governmental Committee representing Malaya and the two Borneo colonies, this time with Lord Lansdowne as Chairman. Agreement was reached on the necessary safeguards for individual liberties, religious freedom and the special position of native peoples, on the continuance and development of education along accustomed lines, on rural improvement, finance and trade, the control of immigration, representation in the Federation parliament and other matters which had roused apprehension among various elements in the two territories.

For example, both Chinese and Christians in Sarawak and North Borneo had resented the statement in the Constitution that "Islam is the religion of the Federation." It was agreed that religion is a matter about which each state must decide for itself; religious freedom is guaranteed for ten years, and after that it cannot be limited in any way without the consent of

the respective state legislatures. Meanwhile if the Federation gives any subvention to Moslem religious or educational bodies it will put equivalent sums at the disposal of the state governments for non-Moslem uses. On education, which particularly concerned the Chinese, who had built and supported their own schools, it was stipulated that present policies should continue. To reassure the Chinese that a flood of Chinese immigrants from Singapore would not impair their economic position, it was provided that federal regulations about immigration into the Bornean states would be subject to approval by those states. In the end, the "package deal" satisfied the main requirements of all but two sets of opponents: the radical Chinese, who took their ideas from the Peking radio (an effective and powerful propaganda instrument throughout South East Asia) and from the Mainland Chinese periodicals which circulated in the colonies until after the Brunei revolt; and the tribal leaders who wished to continue in the familiar pattern of benevolent British tutelage.

Both Sarawak and North Borneo are vast in extent and contain rich and varied resources, largely undeveloped; and in both, the populations are just emerging from primeval conditions. Except in the two capitals, Kuching and Jesselton, neither of the two colonies has until recently known much organized political life. Both, however, possess Legislative Councils, partly appointive, partly elected in about as democratic a manner as the current degree of political sophistication warrants. In Sarawak, the elected membership of what is called the Council Negri is chosen by a "three-tier" system, according to which the people elect District Councils, which in turn elect Divisional Councils, which in turn elect members of the Council Negri. On March 8, the Council Negri voted to join the Malaysian Federation with the agreed safeguards of state and individual rights and interests. To give the population more direct representation, it also decided that the next Council Negri will consist of 36 elected members (an increase from 24), three members appointed by the Governor (a decrease from 15), and three ex officio. It will choose Sarawak's representatives in the Federation parliament.

The elections for this new Council will already have begun before these lines are published, but the distribution and collection of ballots in remote long houses and up-river settlements will be a long process and the results cannot be determined promptly. Some opposition to the Malaysian scheme will doubtless be registered. Though the vote in the Council Negri in favor of the Federation was unanimous, four members abstained, and Ong Kie Wie, leader of the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), walked out before the vote. SUPP, the oldest and best-organized party in Sarawak, mainly Chinese in membership, had for some time been infiltrated with Communist elements. After the Brunei revolt several of its leading Communist members were jailed and others deported to Mainland China. Though Ong Kie Wie is opposed to the "package deal" agreed upon by the Inter-Governmental Committee, he calls himself a moderate and claims to favor Malaysia in

principle (a statement which brought grumbles from the party's Secretary-General, Stephen Yong, when I met with him and other party members in Kuching). If the new elections produce a Council Negri containing a large element opposed to Malaysia, a fresh hurdle will be raised to the smooth formation of the Federation; but the action of the previous Council in March is being taken as final and no action of the new Council will be allowed to block Sarawak's adhesion.

In North Borneo, where political institutions have not evolved at the same pace, the Legislative Council has been composed of 18 "unofficial" members appointed by the Governor from among those recommended by town boards, district councils, the Native Chiefs' Conference and other organizations, plus four ex-officio and three appointed members, with the Governor as Chairman. In the latest local elections, in which over a third of the people voted, Malaysia was the issue. The Sabah Alliance campaigned in favor of joining the Federation, and won. As a result, Donald Stephens, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Alliance, introduced a motion in the Legislative Council proposing membership in Malaysia, and on March 13 it was unanimously adopted. Mr. Stephens emphasizes that the discussions in the Inter-Governmental Committee were full and free. "I wish those who call us stooges of colonialism could have been there," he told me, "to see how strongly we insisted on every necessary provision for the protection of our Bornean interests. The Malayan Government met us at all essential points. We have had self-determination. Our decision has been made."

British officials would have preferred, of course, that the preparation of the two colonies for taking part in representative government had been longer and more intensive. Even so, as they point out, the political development of the peoples involved—tribal, Malay and Chinese—seems to have gone at least as far as in many member states of the United Nations, and the opportunities they have had and will have to express themselves are certainly greater than those given the citizens of many respected one-party states. The *tu quoque* argument is never a very satisfactory one; but if Indonesia, supported by the Communist bloc, ventures to raise the question of self-determination when Malaysia applies for U.N. membership, President Sukarno can be reminded that he refused a plebiscite in West Irian before annexing it.

VI

Indonesia's attitude towards Malaya and the Malaysia project hardened gradually, but the drastic change came only after the rebellion in Brunei on December 8, 1962. President Sukarno at once announced his policy of "confrontation," and what had been criticism turned into open opposition and threats. Although the Philippine Government expressed its opposition in more conventional terms it permitted the rebel leader Azahari to use Manila

as a headquarters even after he had proclaimed himself Prime Minister of the "Unitary State of Northern Kalimantan" and announced that it included not only Brunei but the British colonies of Sarawak and North Borneo also. At first there was suspicion that the Sultan had connived with Azahari to restore the realm of his forefathers, of unlamented memory. And two rebels were actually captured at the gates of the palace, on the outskirts of Brunei Town, with a proclamation to that effect ready for the Sultan's signature. However, he had already taken refuge in the police station in the town, and since this was before the outcome of the rebellion was known it discounts the idea that he was in on the plot.

One reason the rebellion misfired was that it seems to have been scheduled for the spring of 1963 and to have been set off prematurely when the local leaders found that their preparations had become known. Newspapers in Kuala Lumpur, reflecting what was known to the Malayan intelligence, ran stories about the "secret" preparations for a revolt and reported that the Sarawak police had arrested several persons involved (for the revolt spilled over into the border region there). Knowing that surprise was their best weapon, the rebel leaders decided not to delay. Actually, the reports from Brunei and Sarawak do not seem to have been taken in Singapore as portending anything very serious, either by Lord Selkirk, the British Commissioner General for South East Asia, or by the intelligence officers on whom he relied. Early on December 8 crowds of three to four thousand rebels, many of them acting in a desultory way but under a hardcore determined leadership, took over a good part of Brunei Town (though they failed to capture the police station or the Sultan who had fled there) and overran the Seria oil fields. British troops were at once flown from Singapore, and in the course of the fighting which ensued lost seven officers and men before the rebels scattered into the jungle and mangrove swamps. In the course of the following weeks most of them were captured or gave themselves up. All but a few of the leaders were eventually returned to their families.

Just why the revolt occurred is not altogether clear. The Sultan's relatives and court hangers-on were regarded as inefficient and corrupt and believed to profit outrageously from the rich oil revenues. But the people of Brunei shared in the oil wealth too. They have had sickness and old-age insurance, educational and medical facilities and many of the other advantages of a welfare state, besides the pride of being able to pray at the tremendous blue-domed mosque built by the Sultan out of Italian marble. Despite this, Azahari was able to organize the only successful party in Brunei on the basis of resentment against the Sultan's feudal court (not, curiously, against the Sultan) and its favoritism for the urban as against the primitive country population. It is debatable how much the Malaysian issue counted. Some of the disliked court ministers were Malays, lent to the Sultan from Kuala Lumpur, but on the other hand Brunei Malays probably outnumbered the Kadayans and other indigenous people among the rebels. This does not signify as much

as would appear because Brunei Malays may well have felt that Malays from Malaya were lording it over them. To the extent that Malaysia was an issue, it probably did awaken some natural apprehension of the unknown; and obviously Azahari's promised alternative—the annexation of spacious Sarawak and North Borneo to tiny Brunei—would have had a strong local appeal.

The suddenness of the revolt took its backers in Indonesian Kalimantan by surprise, and may have prevented them from sending aid which had been scheduled. As it was, a number of the rebel leaders had been trained in a camp at Malinau, a small town in the northern part of Kalimantan, whence they passed in groups up the Semakong River, penetrated into a backward area of North Borneo and eventually reached Brunei by a mountainous route through northern Sarawak. There was no time to reënforce them, for when word reached Malinau the fighting was over. The Indonesian Government disclaimed any foreknowledge of the revolt, but at once gave it its backing. President Sukarno called it an example of the power of the new "emerging forces" and the Ministry of Information instructed the press to give the rebels every support, which of course it enthusiastically did; and on December 15 the Indonesian Parliament passed a resolution making this position official. As Willard A. Hanna has pointed out,² the West Irian issue had been settled, but here was a new one of comparable appeal, and the Indonesian government apparatus mobilized to popularize it, substituting Britain for the Netherlands as the colonialist scapegoat.

The Philippine authorities had gradually become so embarrassed by Azahari's activities in Manila that when Indonesia invited him to Djakarta they saw him depart on January 31 with relief. In Djakarta foreign opinion is divided as to Azahari's present whereabouts and future role—whether he has been persuaded to go into Kalimantan to organize new "volunteer" forces to make raids into British Borneo or whether he prefers to remain as before outside the zone of operations. There also is divided opinion as to whether President Sukarno is likely to authorize any substantial operations this summer against the British, or later against Malaysia. Some fear that the temptation to embarrass Britain and take revenge on the Tunku will be too strong to be resisted. He must know, of course, that for Indonesia to start hostilities in Borneo, directly or under a disguise, would end any prospect of American aid. But it must be set down as at least an open question whether he is of a temperament to put an economic goal ahead of a dramatic political one.

VII

Complicating the situation as the August 31 date approaches is the claim put forward by the Philippines to residual sovereign rights in a part of British North Borneo. The claim is too complicated historically and legally to be more than touched on in the broadest outlines. It turns, essentially, on

whether the Sultan of Sulu in 1878 ceded or leased in perpetuity a section of the coast of North Borneo lying mainly in what is now the British crown colony but partly in the Indonesian territory of Northern Kalimantan, with undefined limits inland, to two private individuals representing a British company; and on whether after a number of confusing transactions by various persons and companies and negotiations and treaties by various governments, including those which transformed the Spanish Philippine Islands first into an American dependency, and afterward into the independent Philippine Republic, that Republic inherited or otherwise possesses any sovereign rights in the territory in question. The original deed was written in the Malay language and in Arabic characters. The British Governor of Labuan, who witnessed the negotiations, translated the vital part of it to the effect that the Sultan did "hereby grant, concede and cede of our own free will and in perpetuity to Baron de Overbeck of Hong Kong and Alfred Dent of London as representatives of a British company co-jointly, their heirs, successors and assigns forever and in perpetuity all the rights and powers belonging to me over all the territories and lands being tributary to us on the island of Borneo." There followed a rather loose description of those lands and the stipulation that the Sultan and his heirs should be paid \$5,000 annually as compensation. (This sum has been paid regularly whenever the proper heirs could be identified among many claimants.)³

Several years ago, when President Macapagal was a member of the Philippine Foreign Office, he became interested in a dormant claim which the Philippines had to the Turtle Islands, lying to the north of Borneo; and the British Government, which considered the islands inconsequential, agreed without difficulty to transfer them to Philippine control. Later he studied the claim to a part of North Borneo, and when he became President advanced it vigorously. In retrospect, it is plain that Britain would have done well either to work out a compromise at the start or agree that if the Philippine Government considered the claim good enough to subject it to judicial determination the dispute could be taken jointly to the World Court. Even if the latter course were adopted now it would not delay the formation of Malaysia; it simply would mean that the Federation would come into being subject to clearing the title to a small part of its territory. The Government of Malaya would of course have to commit the future Federation to follow through the policy inaugurated by the British Government.

Various advantages might be offered the Philippines to compromise their claim to territorial sovereignty rather than face a long judicial process and an outcome that is at best dubious. One inducement of great value to the Philippines would be an arrangement to deal jointly with the piracy and smuggling that go on in the Sulu Sea. At the wharves in Jesselton one sees fast Philippine boats lined up, waiting to load cargoes of cigarettes which are then smuggled into the Philippines at great fiscal loss to the Philippine Government. The traffic goes on quite openly, the North Borneo Government

claiming that it cannot prevent the free sale of cigarettes and that the responsibility for policing Philippine waters belongs to the Philippines. The situation seems one in which the two sides could agree to cooperate to end both piracy and smuggling; North Borneo could offer Philippine patrols the right to come into Borneo harbors to fuel and to spot and follow boats engaged in smuggling; and North Borneo could be given reciprocal rights to follow pirates into Philippine waters. Other advantages that the Philippines might receive could be a preferred position for Philippine capital in developing industrial projects in North Borneo and landing rights for Philippine airlines throughout Malaysia, so that businessmen and tourists could go freely back and forth (something already discussed, incidentally, in A.S.A. meetings).

VIII

The United States has favored steps towards the consolidation of South East Asia. SEATO in its original concept included the hope that if outside protection were provided the nations of the area which are ethnically and culturally related might in time draw together on a basis of individual independence and mutual self-help. A.S.A. seemed a step in that direction. When the Malaysian project was broached, Washington considered it a logical way for Britain to divest itself of its colonial possessions in Borneo and provide them with opportunities for political and economic development within a congenial democratic framework. And it was satisfactory, too, that a federation was in prospect instead of the fragmentation into fragile national states which has often followed the end of an era of colonial rule. President Kennedy therefore gave the project his blessing. In a press conference on February 14 he was asked whether Britain's plan to relinquish its colonial possessions in South East Asia and merge them in a Malaysian Federation threatened to create new dangers in the area. He replied that the United States has supported the Federation proposal, although he recognized that it is under pressure from several directions. "But I am hopeful it will sustain itself, because it is the best hope of security for that very vital part of the world."

Thus the United States not only seems to feel that Malaysia is the best solution for developing the backward Bornean territories, with proper assurances for the protection of their individual rights and interests, but agrees that it will be a stronger barrier to southward Communist Chinese pressure than would a series of disjointed and weak territories without a common policy and without a British defense guarantee. Washington has made this plain in Manila, though with care to avoid anything that might seem improper pressure, and undoubtedly President Sukarno has been given the same advice, though it is recognized that in his case advice from the West is always weighed against advice from the East, and the latter has usually

prevailed. Until recently one might have hoped that Moscow would tend to discourage President Sukarno from risky enterprises abroad; but Soviet influence seems to have become less effective in Indonesia, as in Laos and North Viet Nam, and unless Moscow and Peking can resolve their general and extensive conflict of interests, their tendency to pull in opposite directions in Indonesia will continue, with the likelihood that Peking's pull will be increasingly effective inside the Indonesian Communist Party and therefore increasingly influential on Indonesian policy.

Continued trouble in Borneo cannot be ruled out. If President Sukarno keeps his propaganda against Malaysia boiling even after the Federation actually comes into being, and if he decides that this agitation can profitably be worked up into a guerrilla war along the jungle frontiers of Borneo, we must be prepared for a new time of tension and danger—not just in a limited area but in the whole region where there is a conflict of ambitions between Malaysia and an Indonesia backed by Communist China for its own revolutionary and expansionist purposes. We have seen in Viet Nam how far this sort of conflict can lead. In Sarawak many members of SUPP, the best-organized party, still have Communist leanings; and in North Borneo there is a colony of 30,000 Indonesian immigrants, a potential fifth column. Sukarno can use either of the two propaganda approaches that are available to him to enlist one or other of these groups, or both. The fact that General Nasution recently threw his weight against the formation of Malaysia is a bad augury for peace. In a provocative speech on May 8, at a town in Kalimantan, he said that Malaysia "economically and militarily will be dominated eventually by a non-Malay power" and thus will become a source of subversion against Indonesia. He called on the youth of Kalimantan to intensify their training and support their brothers to the north with all their might, which in plain language means either to join the rebel groups or help them in their raids into Malaysian territory.

There are two ways of meeting these threats. The British already have considerable garrisons at strategic points in Borneo; and word came in early May that they were being increased both by land forces and by naval vessels, including the commando carrier *Albion* and transport aircraft and helicopters. It was also announced that Australia will, contrary to expectations, continue to maintain the Australian air squadrons in Penang as an indication that it is more than theoretically interested in the security of Malaysia. The second method will be gradually to spread a screen of special police forces along the jungle frontiers. The British and the Malaysians have had valuable experience in dealing with the Communist guerrillas in Malaya. But as that experience showed, the process can be gruelling and protracted.

The situation, then, is at best potentially explosive. Whether it does or does not explode rests primarily at this time with President Sukarno. Although outside pressure can sometimes have a reverse effect from that intended, it would seem that in dealing with a pragmatist like the Indonesian President

we would be wrong not to state unequivocally where our national interests lie—namely that we are deeply concerned to see that a flanking movement shall not develop around our present delicate and indeed dangerous position in South Viet Nam, and that we consider the best way of forestalling this is for Malaysia to be a success.

Senator Mike Mansfield, after visiting parts of South East Asia before the controversy over Malaysia became intense, called for an American attitude of "cordial non-involvement." Given the enormous U.S. military and economic investment in the security of neighboring countries, the President's blessing for Malaysia and Senator Mansfield's attitude of cordiality towards it may not provide effective protection for American interests in the region as a whole. The territories which will join to form Malaysia have been primarily a British interest and the protection of them remains primarily a British responsibility. But if any of them are attacked, American relations with the attacking nation, however camouflaged its participation in the aggression might be, would be drastically affected; at a minimum, the United States would cease any and all help to that nation and might well break diplomatic relations with it. If the hostilities spread, and if the American position in Viet Nam became endangered by a creeping flanking movement by Communist China in support of Indonesia, no one can be sure that a policy of non-involvement would be adequate. The position assigned the Seventh Fleet would become of paramount importance.

Notes

- 1 See "Singapore: Problem Child," by William P. Maddox, *Foreign Affairs*, April 1962.
- 2 "Malaysia, A Federation in Prospect," Part XV, American Universities Field Staff, Reports Service (South East Asia Series, v. XI, no. 3).
- 3 For a careful exposition of the Philippine case see "Legal Aspects of the North Borneo Question," by Pacifico Aortiz, in *Philippine Studies: A Quarterly*, Manila, January 1963. A brief account from the British viewpoint is "The Claim for North Borneo by the Philippines," a pamphlet by K. G. Tregonning, Professor of History at the University of Malaya, Singapore.

MALAYSIA

R. S. Milne

Source: *Asian Survey* 4(2) (1964): 695-701.

Malaysia came into existence in 1963 as intended, but there were minor qualifications and one ominous shadow. The Sultan of Brunei did not join, and the new Federation was limited to Malaya, Singapore, Sabah (North Borneo), and Sarawak. Also, the date for its formation was deferred for a few days to meet objections from Indonesia and the Philippines. More seriously, even this delay did not appease Indonesian opposition, which on the contrary has appreciably hardened.

Brunei's entry into the new Federation had always been complicated by its great wealth from oil and the difficulty of deciding how much of the proceeds of taxing oil would go to the Federal government. This seems to have been a factor in eventually deciding the Sultan to stay out, although the question of his precedence in the Federation (which would determine his chances of becoming, in due course, Head of the Federation or Yang di-Pertuan Agong) also was relevant.

Indonesia supported the Brunei revolt of December 1962; and throughout 1963 her opposition to Malaysia, with brief tactical switches, became more and more plain. The year began with an exchange of insults between Indonesian and Malayan leaders; since the Indonesians always have a word for it, they labelled their new policy "confrontation." This stopped short of large-scale warfare, but it included patrols by Indonesian gun-boats and interference with Malayan fishermen, also training "volunteers" for the *Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara* (North Borneo National Army), resulting in a long series of incidents on the borders of the North Borneo States and Indonesia. At the same time there was the perpetual threat of Communist subversion in Sarawak leading on April 20 to the calling in of all arms and ammunition from "non-natives"—that is, the Chinese.¹

The Philippines, in spite of its claim to North Borneo, seemed at one time to be playing the role of mediator between Indonesia and Malaya. Partly as a result of its efforts, representatives of the three governments met in Tokyo,

and in June of 1963 in Manila, and agreed that a new three-nation organization should be formed—namely, Maphilindo. This would not be a federation, but would be “a grouping of the three nations of Malay origin working together in closest harmony but without surrendering any portion of their sovereignty.” It was also decided that an independent and impartial authority, the Secretary-General of the United Nations or his representatives, should make enquiry into whether the Borneo territories supported Malaysia or not. The wider implications of Maphilindo aroused speculation. What could the three countries be *for*? Only, in some rather ill-defined sense, “Malay culture.” What could they be *against*? Only, in some form, the Chinese. Maphilindo might have been conceived of as a long-range bulwark against the ambitions of Peking. Alternatively, it might have been the prelude to tougher action, on the Indonesian pattern, against Chinese actually resident in Malaya and the Philippines. It was certainly in this light that Mr. D. R. Seenivasagam, the leader of the People’s Progressive Party (which depends largely on Chinese votes), viewed and denounced Maphilindo. It is significant that the Tunku, the Malayan Prime Minister, thought it worthwhile to take the trouble to deny that Maphilindo was aimed against the Chinese in Malaya.

But speculation on the import of Maphilindo was cut short by a renewal of confrontation. In spite of the agreement that a U.N. enquiry should be held, Malaya felt obliged to continue with her original plans for Malaysia; and the final arrangements were discussed in London in July 1963. It was believed that the U.N. enquiry would be favorable and would be announced in time for the original target date of August 31 to be observed. The Indonesians, however, wanted delay; and they said that the wishes of the peoples of Borneo should be ascertained by means of a referendum, although this had not actually been stated in the reports of the June Manila Conference. The leaders of the three countries met at a “Summit” Conference in July and August. Once again there was temporary agreement. The Indonesians dropped the referendum proposals while Malaya postponed the formation of Malaysia for two weeks or so in order to give the U.N. team time to carry out its survey. When published, the U.N. report agreed that Malaysia had been a major issue at the recent elections in North Borneo and Sarawak and that the results indicated support for Malaysia. However, as might have been expected, Indonesia has not accepted the conclusions of the report on the ground that the U.N. team’s procedures differed from those agreed on by the three countries. Since then the situation has deteriorated almost as far as is possible without slipping into actual war. Malaysia has broken off diplomatic relations with Indonesia and the Philippines. The British Ambassador’s residence in Djakarta has been attacked. The Tunku has been burned in effigy in Djakarta, and Dr. Soekarno has received reciprocal treatment in Kuala Lumpur. Indonesia has stepped up naval patrols and has announced that she will no longer

trade with Malaysia; in particular she will no longer send rubber for processing or tin for smelting.

Militarily, Malaysia on her own is extremely weak compared with Indonesia. At the beginning of 1963 she had an army of about 10,000 regulars and 5,000 reserves, an air force of about 30 machines, and a navy of ten old vessels.² A few fast patrol vessels were added during the year. In a supplementary Malayan budget in February 1963 an extra M\$75 million was voted for defense, about 80% more than previously. Over a five-year period it was proposed that defense expenditure should approximately double. A further supplementary estimate for defense was approved by Parliament in December. In the same month registration for national service began for men between 21 and 28. Nevertheless, Malaysia is almost entirely dependent for her defense on outside help. Under an extension of the 1957 defense agreement with Britain, which applied to Malaya, British troops are stationed on the mainland of Malaya, in Singapore, and in the Borneo territories. There are also still Australian and New Zealand troops in Malaya, although there is no hard and fast defense agreement actually binding these countries to come to Malaysia's aid, as Britain is committed to do. In practice, it is almost certain that they would help her in case of a large-scale engagement.³ Malaysia also enjoys, in principle, the diplomatic support of the United States, although the United States is apprehensive of antagonizing Indonesia and of "driving her further towards Communism." Because of confrontation there has been a concentration of forces in the Borneo territories. By the end of September there were five or six thousand British troops there—the equivalent of a strong brigade group—and it was announced that two battalions of the Malay Regiment would be sent there in October.

The final Malaysia Agreement, which was embodied in the Malaysia Act,⁴ spelled out the various safeguards previously recommended for Sabah and Sarawak. In particular, there were provisions to restrict immigration to these territories from Malaya and Singapore, to retain for the present the use of English as the official language for the state governments, to give the indigenous peoples certain privileges for licenses, admissions to the public service and so on. In both Sabah and Sarawak the government, formed through a series of indirect elections stemming originally from direct elections at local level, consists of a group of pro-Malaysia parties. In Sabah, the Prime Minister is Mr. Donald Stephens; in Sarawak, Mr. Stephen Kalong Ningkan. Both these groups are affiliated with the Alliance Party in Malaya (and Singapore), forming a Malaysia-wide Alliance. The exact political situation is hard to judge because of the large number of persons elected as independents. The opposition parties in Sarawak are stronger than those in Sabah. Prominent in the Sarawak opposition is the Chinese-based Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), the oldest party in Sarawak, which campaigned against Malaysia. It has often been accused by right-wing parties of containing subversive elements. Also outside the Alliance is the Party Negara

of Sarawak (PANAS), which supported Malaysia, but which broke away before the elections and later made a tactical deal for electoral purposes with the SUPP. At the same time it claimed that it was still pro-Malaysia. Members for the Federal Parliament from the two Borneo territories have been chosen by their respective legislatures. All the sixteen members from Sabah are from the Alliance; seventeen of the members from Sarawak are Alliance while three are SUPP, three PANAS, and one independent.

For Singapore, 1963 was perhaps *the* year of the "Battle for Merger."⁵ In 1962, the government party (The People's Action Party) had secured popular approval at a referendum for the kind of terms they favored for joining with Malaya. But the fight was not yet over; in 1963, it intensified and revealed itself as a battle on several fronts. Some of these were not of major importance but were designed to improve the party's prestige and image and so strengthen it for more vital contests. Thus, in the negotiations with the British and with the government of the Federation of Malaya, the Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, wished to establish his reputation as a "tough" negotiator who would drive a hard bargain for the people of Singapore. On settling the details, as opposed to the principles, of merger, Mr. Lee fought fiercely on such issues as the transfer of British land and property to Singapore, the terms on which Singapore would make loans to the Borneo territories, and the proportion of revenues collected in Singapore to be paid to the Federal government (apart from a few exceptions, 40%).

Inside Singapore the government's position seemed shaky in mid 1963. In the Assembly it had only the same number of seats as the total held by the opposition parties. In July a government bill to provide for elections to the 15 Singapore seats in the Federal Parliament failed to pass the Assembly, and it was announced that elections for a new Singapore Assembly would be held after Malaysia was formed. The length of the campaign was short—just over a week. But the government had made extensive preparations; for months the Prime Minister had been touring the constituencies and passing through a series of triumphal arches, some depicting Chinese legends, which were dismantled and re-erected for each section of his tour. Considerable prominence was given on TV (newly-introduced) and radio to the government's point of view. Furthermore, several of the leaders of the main (Barisan Socialis) opposition party had been arrested earlier in the year. During the election there was the half-explicit and half-implicit government threat that, even if the Barisan were to be returned, the central government of the Federation (which now had powers over internal security) would intervene and take over rather than allow a Communist-controlled government in Singapore.

With the advantage of hindsight it is easy to see the importance of these considerations. Before the election it was not so easy. In the 1962 referendum the blank votes totalled 25%. This was the *minimum* anti-Malaysia vote, because the government had tried to convince the voters that it was illegal to

cast a blank vote. The P.A.P. proportion of the vote at the 1959 General Election was only about 53%, most of the rest having gone to the right-wing parties, notably the Alliance, the Liberal-Socialists, and the United Malays National Organization. If the 1959 right-wing vote could have been mobilized behind the Alliance in 1963, the left would have been hopelessly split between the P.A.P., the Barisan, and the one-man (but 46-candidate) United People's Party of Mr. Ong Eng Guan. But the right-wing vote did not behave in this way. The Alliance (United Malays National Organization, Malaysian Chinese Association, Malayan Indian Congress, and Singapore People's Alliance) was not in fact united, nor was it appreciably allied. Its leader, Tun Lim Yew Hock, a former Chief Minister, gave the impression on TV of a man more disgusted by the actions of his opponents than eager to serve Singapore. In fact Tun Lim did not even contest a seat at the election. On polling day the right-wing was completely eliminated from the Assembly, its 8% of the vote not winning it a single seat. Mr. Ong's party obtained only about the same percentage of the vote, but he himself retained his seat. The P.A.P. won 37 seats with 47% of the vote, the Barisan (and its ally, Party Ra'ayat) 13 seats with 33%. As at the 1962 Referendum, the Barisan did relatively better in the rural constituencies. If the likely assumption is made that the 1963 Barisan and UPP voters (apart from new voters) had voted P.A.P. in 1959, the conclusion is inescapable that the P.A.P. was returned in 1963 mainly by former right-wing voters. The government's record in office, including a freedom from corruption almost unique in Asia, had made it a popular rallying-point for those who believed that the Barisan was pro-Communist.

There have been further developments since the election: notably a not very successful strike by the pro-Barisan trade unions, further arrests of Barisan leaders, and arrests at Nanyang University, whose millionaire Chancellor, Mr. Tan Lark Sye, supported the Barisan (later, proceedings were started to withdraw his citizenship). Perhaps more significant in the long run are the possible repercussions on politics in Malaya. Apparently Mr. Lee Kuan Yew was also fighting a battle on yet another front and was striving to extend the future influence of the P.A.P. beyond Singapore. His long-term aim could be to disrupt the United Malays National Organization-Malaysian Chinese Association-Malayan Indian Congress Alliance in Malaya and remold that Alliance with the P.A.P. replacing the MCA.⁶ This strategy has become more and more apparent: in Mr. Lee's battles with Mr. Tan Siew Sin, the Federal Finance Minister who is also President of the MCA, over the terms of merger; in his insistence that the P.A.P. alone knows how to defeat Chinese pro-Communist elements in the towns; in his wooing of UMNO. This last aspect of his strategy is seen in the P.A.P. choice of who should represent Singapore in the Federal Parliament. For the House of Representatives, the P.A.P. chose twelve Assemblymen and allowed the Barisan to choose three. But for the two Senators from Singapore the P.A.P.,

after choosing the President of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Singapore, invited the Tunku to choose the other Senator. The offer was accepted. For Mr. Lee it could constitute a useful springboard for further "co-operation" with UMNO.

The MCA in Malaya is to some degree vulnerable to future P.A.P. expansion there and to a possible future bid by the P.A.P. to replace it as UMNO's partner. In some areas, such as Johore, it has retained its strength. But elsewhere some Chinese think that it has conceded too much to its Malay partner in the Alliance and that Malay privileges have stifled Chinese rights. This is the line of the People's Progressive Party and, to a lesser degree, of the United Democratic Party. On the other hand some of the younger Chinese are perhaps not so much "pro-Chinese" as looking for an ideology. The MCA does not offer such an ideology, but it may sometimes have conveyed the image of a rich man's party in which too many of the leaders sit in air-conditioned offices instead of "meeting the people." There has recently been dissatisfaction in the Youth Section of the MCA on this score. At the MCA Assembly in November the results of the elections to party offices showed a shift in the balance of power towards the younger elements. For young Chinese in search of an ideology the Labor Party, the Chinese-dominated component of the Socialist Front, may prove attractive. The electoral prospects of the Socialist Front are affected in the same way as the Barisans' were—from time to time some of its key workers are put in detention. Its most prominent member to be arrested so far is Inche Ahmad Boestamam of the Party Rakyat, the Malay component of the Front, arrested in February 1963, on the ground that he had been connected with the Brunei revolt of December 1962.

Another threat to the Alliance comes from the former Minister for Agriculture: Inche Abdul Aziz bin Ishak has started a new National Convention Party which, fighting on a limited front in 1964, may win one or two seats in areas where there is a high concentration of Malay fishermen or padi planters. It is fashionable to write off the "religious" Pan-Malayan Islamic Party as a declining force in a developing country, but this could be a mistake in view of the dedicated hard work being put in by key members of the party.

There are two big question marks about the results of the 1964 Federal election. One is the effect of Indonesian confrontation on support for the government. Will Indonesia's attitude cause voters to rally to the government? Or will the economic sufferings from confrontation cause them to blame it and turn against it? A second doubtful factor is the extent to which the opposition parties can form electoral pacts against the Alliance. Because of the divisions in the opposition at the 1959 election the Alliance secured 74 out of 104 seats with only 51% of the votes cast. Similarly, in the local authority elections of 1963, which did not cover the whole of Malaya, the Alliance won 71% of the seats with 49% of the votes. It should also be remembered that the Alliance has a majority of the representatives already

chosen for the Federal Parliament from Singapore and the Borneo territories. It can count on the votes of 33 of these 55 members.

Economically, the dominant features of the year were the "Rueff Report"⁷ and the consequences of confrontation. The Report made recommendations for co-ordinating development planning in Malaysia, for harmonizing tariff policies, and for preserving the entrepot trade of Singapore and Penang—notably by the establishment of a "free zone" in each of these ports. The prospect of a gradual change from "free port status" has been largely accepted in Singapore, but has caused much heartburning in Penang which unlike Singapore does not have the compensating hope of rapid industrialization.

Confrontation has so far hit Malaysia in two ways, by necessitating a greater expenditure on defense and by causing economic distress through loss of trade. Indonesia's actions have undoubtedly hurt herself economically, although some of the more Cassandra-like Malaysian statements on Indonesia's inability to extricate herself from her difficulties are just a little reminiscent of British predictions of Egyptian inability to manage the Suez Canal in 1956. In any case it is certain that Malaysia has also been seriously hit. No estimates of the economic damage have been published, but they must be considerable. For instance, 40% of Singapore's entrepot trade in rubber in 1961 originated in Indonesia.⁸ It may also be significant that in the Singapore Assembly debates of October 1963, the Prime Minister did not deny that about 10,000 persons in Singapore had been thrown out of work by the stoppage of trade with Indonesia. Further details of the damage from loss of trade were given in Parliament during December. In conjunction with the increased cost of defense they are bound to place a severe strain on the economy.

Notes

- 1 *The Danger Within* (Sarawak Information Service, 1963).
- 2 *Straits Times*, Feb. 15, 1963.
- 3 One of the issues on which the Australian Liberal-Country Party government held a General Election in November 1963, was on its pledge of military assistance to Malaysia.
- 4 Federation of Malaya, Act of Parliament No. 26 of 1963.
- 5 The title of a book of speeches published by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1962.
- 6 But not before the next Federal Election. (Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, *Straits Times*, Sept. 10, 1963.)
- 7 See *Selected Reading*.
- 8 *Rueff Report*, pp. 106-7.

Selected Reading

Means, Gordon P. "Malaysia—A New Federation in South East Asia," *Pacific Affairs*, XXXVI (June 1963), 138-159.

- Smith, T. E. *The Background to Malaysia*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Malaysia Agreement concluded between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Federation of Malaya, North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore*. London: HMSO, Cmd. 2094, 1963.
- Report on the Economic Aspects of Malaysia by a Mission of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1963, (the "Rueff Report").

BRUNEI

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the author to the editor, dated 10/10/1998. The letter discusses the author's interest in the journal and the specific topic of the article.

2. The second part of the document is the title page of the article, which includes the title, author's name, and affiliation.

3. The third part of the document is the abstract, which provides a brief summary of the article's content.

4. The fourth part of the document is the introduction, which sets the context for the research and states the objectives of the study.

5. The fifth part of the document is the methodology, which describes the research design and the data collection methods used.

6. The sixth part of the document is the results, which present the findings of the study in a clear and concise manner.

7. The seventh part of the document is the discussion, which interprets the results and discusses their implications for the field.

8. The eighth part of the document is the conclusion, which summarizes the main findings and provides a final statement on the research.

9. The ninth part of the document is the references, which list the sources used in the research.

10. The tenth part of the document is the appendix, which contains additional information related to the study.

11. The eleventh part of the document is the acknowledgments, which thank the individuals and organizations that supported the research.

12. The twelfth part of the document is the author's biography, which provides a brief overview of the author's background and research interests.

13. The thirteenth part of the document is the index, which lists the page numbers for each section of the article.

BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN BRUNEI 1906-1959

A. V. M. Horton

Source: *Modern Asian Studies* 20(2) (1986): 353-74.

I

The tiny, oil-rich Sultanate of Brunei, situated on the north-west coast of Borneo, regained full independence at the end of 1983, when the United Kingdom surrendered responsibility for its defence and foreign policy. Internally, the predominantly Muslim, Malay State has been self-governing since 1959, albeit by an autocratic monarchy. In this article, however, I shall focus on the British 'Residency' in Brunei, which lasted from January 1906 until September 1959.

At the end of 1905, Brunei—reduced to two small, detached enclaves (area 2,226 square miles) within Sarawak—had reached the nadir of its fortunes. Indeed, but for the reluctant intervention of the British Government at this juncture, the Sultanate would have been swallowed up entirely by the famous Brooke Raj. The Kingdom of Brunei, however, has a proud history stretching back to the seventh century A.D., long before the foundation (probably in 1515) of the Muslim Sultanate;¹ and, in order to prevent the extinction of his ancient line, Sultan Hashim (reigned 1885–May 1906) 'requested' British assistance in the internal administration of his country. By the Anglo-Brunei Treaty of 1905–06² he consented to receive a British officer, to be styled 'Resident', whose 'advice' was to be 'taken and acted upon on all questions in Brunei other than those affecting the Muhammadan religion, in order that a similar system may be established to that existing in other Malay States now under British Protection'.³

Successive Residents, seconded originally from the Malayan Civil Service (M.C.S.), controlled the administration of Brunei until 1959. Although they were responsible to a 'High Commissioner' in Singapore, the latter was eight hundred miles away and had far more pressing concerns than those of

Brunei; hence, apart from the tight rein kept on expenditure, the Resident was left with almost a free hand. On the other hand, it is important to remember that Brunei was *not* a British colony as such: the Resident exercised his authority in the name of the Sultan, who was always accorded the highest respect; and the fact that persuasion was preferred to dictation produced subtle limitations on a Resident's freedom of action. By the 1950s, when a strong Sultan had emerged, the Ruler could block effectively anything which went against his wishes, and the Treaty clause requiring acceptance of advice was virtually a dead letter.

II

It is necessary to insert here a few details about Brunei. The larger, western wing consists of three riverine districts—(from west to east) Belait, Tutong and Brunei—whilst the Temburong alone forms the isolated Eastern wing. In 1911 the population numbered 21,718, of whom almost half were Malays living in the capital, Brunei Town—a 'River Village', consisting of houses built 'entirely over the water wherever mud flats make it possible to erect a dwelling'.⁴ A further quarter were Kedayans, to be found mainly in the immediately surrounding district. Both Malays and Kedayans are Muslims. The outlying regions were inhabited by a variety of pagan tribes, some with a 'vener' of Islam;⁵ later there was a tendency to '*masuk Melayu*', i.e. to become Muslim and hence 'Malay'. By 1960 the total population had quadrupled (83,877), principally because of immigration into Belait district after the discovery, in 1929, of an oilfield there. The capital, originally the only settlement of consequence, found itself rivalled increasingly by the new oil-field townships of Seria and Kuala Belait. Chinese settlers, who continue to dominate local business, accounted for one quarter of the inhabitants by 1960, compared with only 3% in 1911; but, to this day, almost all of them are denied Brunei citizenship.

III

Official Anglo-Brunei ties commenced in 1846-47 when Labuan Island (in Brunei Bay) was acquired as a Crown Colony to serve as a coaling station and as a base both for the suppression of piracy and for the expansion of British trade in the South China Sea. It soon became clear that Labuan would be a costly burden to the Imperial Government, which determined to avoid any further entanglement in Borneo. This proved impossible. During the second half of the nineteenth century two unofficial colonial enterprises—the Brooke Rajahs in Sarawak and the Chartered Company in British North Borneo (B.N.B.C.)—carved large and expanding states of their own out of Brunei's territory; and they looked to London for protection in an increasingly uncertain world. The British Government, for its part,

feared that the disarray existing in the Sultanate might tempt a rival colonial power to obtain a foothold on the north-west coast of Borneo, thereby threatening British trade routes between India and China, and, to a lesser extent, between Hong Kong and Sydney. In 1888, therefore, each of the three territories—Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo—became British Protectorates, but were left largely in control of their internal administration.⁶

In fact, Brunei was regarded as a nuisance by the British Government, which had no wish to become further involved in its 'squalid'⁷ affairs; on the contrary, London's aim was the incorporation of the Sultanate within Sarawak, the most healthy and viable State in 'British' Borneo. This solution was preferred to direct control because it was considered cheaper and would keep official British commitments to a minimum. The Protectorate Treaty was a desirable first step, nevertheless, in order to preclude possible interference in Brunei by a rival colonial power before the dissolution of the Sultanate had been achieved.⁸ Sultan Hashim, naturally, was not informed of these intentions: Whitehall, in any case, believed he was willing to sell his country and that the only point at issue would be the terms. Paradoxically, as we shall see, the 1888 Treaty contributed to the survival of the Sultanate.

In 1890 Rajah Charles Brooke annexed Limbang district, which today separates the two wings of Brunei. Sultan Hashim appealed to the United Kingdom for protection; but London accepted the spurious Sarawak claims that, after a minor revolt in 1884, the Limbang people had thrown off 'oppressive' Brunei rule, refused to pay taxes to the Sultan, and had raised the Sarawak flag of their own volition. In fairness, it must be added that there *had* been a degree of misrule in Limbang and that, after they became acquainted with Brooke methods of administration, Limbang folk revealed little inclination to be restored to Brunei.

Even so, the loss of Limbang was a critical blow to the Sultanate, the 'final step towards the ruin of Brunei'.⁹ For, in the local phrase, 'Brunei is Limbang, and Limbang Brunei'.¹⁰ The Limbang is the true river of Brunei Town, the nominal Brunei 'River'—salt throughout its length—being an arm of the sea and having no *ulu* (upper reaches). As a result, the River Villagers depended on the Limbang for food, clothing and materials for housing and fishing. Sarawak soon began to tax these items so that Brunei Malays could no longer afford to 'import' them and had either to go without or remove to Limbang. Brunei patriotism was sufficiently powerful to render unattractive the latter alternative. In addition the four local sago factories had been forced out of business. All this produced considerable distress in Brunei Town. Furthermore, Sultan Hashim's own prestige had suffered: he had been a compromise candidate to the throne, he was at odds with his leading ministers (whom, by custom, he was unable to dismiss), and his inability to persuade the British Government to evict the Rajah from Limbang undermined further his already shaky position. For the next fifteen years he protested the loss of the district almost to the point of monomania: 'We are greatly

afflicted with sorrow and disgrace', he complained to Queen Victoria; Limbang should be returned 'so that our city of Brunei may not be oppressed by Rajah Brooke and the country of Brunei and our Government not be destroyed by Rajah Brooke'.¹¹ The issue, one Foreign Office clerk minuted, was 'rather an awkward one' for 'if brought up in the House it will be very difficult to convince people that the Sultan has not been somewhat badly treated'.¹² Fortunately for the Foreign Office, Brunei had no champion in the Commons. Sultan Hashim refused to accept the proffered cash compensation ('cession money'); and, eventually, Whitehall came to believe that he was concerned less with money than with the continued survival of his threatened country.¹³

There was, indeed, an intense patriotism and loyalty to the Crown amongst most Bruneians, who were immensely suspicious of foreigners. Sultan Hashim took great pride in his ancient lineage, particularly in a sixteenth-century predecessor who was supposed to have ruled all Borneo and to have made conquests further afield. This patriotism, however, was blended with ignorance of the outside world: it is unlikely that Sultan Hashim had ventured beyond even Labuan—in the Malay phrase he was '*katak di-bawah tempurong*' ('a frog under a coconut shell'), and so were most of his people, apart from the few who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Be that as it may, fear of 'the blotting out of an ancient dynasty' was 'sufficiently strong' to mould Brunei's policy.¹⁴

In April 1904 a Straits Settlements' official, M. S. H. McArthur (1872–1934) was despatched to Brunei to report on the situation there. After discussing the evils of Brunei's rule, the disaffection prevailing in the out-districts, and the State's approaching bankruptcy and probable dissolution, he suggested that it would be unjust for the country to be incorporated within Sarawak because of the overwhelming opposition to the Rajah, at least in the capital. A British Residency, on the other hand, would be 'less obnoxious' to leading Malays. Mr McArthur demonstrated also that Brunei was more valuable than had been supposed and might even become self-supporting within a reasonable space of time. The British Government, in accepting his conclusions, saw no reason why the success of British administration in Malaya should not be repeated in Borneo. For the longer term, it was hoped that both Sarawak and North Borneo would fall under the direct control of the Colonial Office and could be amalgamated to form a 'larger colony', towards which end a Residency in Brunei was seen as a first step. Sarawak, which had once been admired, was now considered unprogressive, its dependence on Iban military power deprecated, and the heirs to the Rajah's absolute rule were an unknown quantity. The B.N.B.C., on the other hand, was in financial straits and its administration was 'frankly commercial'¹⁵ in character. Neither could be entrusted with the additional responsibility of ruling Brunei. Finally, there may have been an element of guilt on the part of H.M.G.: Sir John Anderson, the High Commissioner,

reported to the Colonial Office in 1905 that Brunei had 'certainly not derived any benefit in the past from its position under British protection' and 'unless the Protection guaranteed the Sultan is nominal only, and the advantages of the [1888] Treaty are entirely confined to His Majesty's Government, it appears to me morally impossible . . . to force it [absorption by Sarawak] upon the Sultan . . .'¹⁶ Hence it was decided to install a Resident, and to combine the running of Brunei with that of Labuan, which had been in the hands of the B.N.B.C. since 1890.¹⁷ The new administration was to be 'of a simple character' only.¹⁸

IV

Mr McArthur himself became the first Resident (1906-08); but before he could get down to the main tasks in hand, the pretensions of the Rajah had to be rebuffed. Sir Charles Brooke G.C.M.G. (reigned 1868-1917) had understood that Brunei—'that blot on the map'¹⁹—was within his 'sphere' and should fall to him: this was his lifetime's ambition and he was furious that his 'Manifest Destiny' was to be thwarted. His vanity was hurt by the hint, implicit in the appointment of a Resident, that he was unfit to rule Brunei. Added to that were ideological disagreements: Sir Charles discouraged capitalist investment in Sarawak, he considered official education policies unsuitable, and he ensured that his officers achieved a close intimacy with the governed; Malayan Civil Servants, on the other hand, he declared to be not knowledgeable of Borneo, they would not govern in the people's interest, they would impose a 'complicated system' and the result would be bloodshed.²⁰ The Colonial Office rejected these allegations and inaccurate predictions; but Sir Charles allowed his 'soreness' to lead him to conduct a campaign to undermine the Residency in the hope of forcing a reversal of the decision in his favour. This involved making complaints to the Colonial Office, getting questions asked in the Commons, stirring up trouble in Brunei, and attempting to obtain signatures to petitions. But he won only desultory support in the Sultanate, where the new order was acceptable to 'all but those whose powers of oppression and extortion [had] been clipped'.²¹ As late as September 1907 the Rajah was seeking permission to take over in Brunei; unfortunately for him, the Colonial Office stood its ground.

On the other hand, Rajah Brooke continued to maintain a presence in the Sultanate: the Brunei Government's immediate priority was to regain full sovereignty over even the little territory it retained. Sir Charles, therefore, was reminded that the extensive areas of land he owned in Brunei were held in his private capacity and might not be treated as part of Sarawak. Hence he was required to dismantle his skeleton administration in the Muaras (at the mouth of the Brunei River); but he managed to retain all revenue rights there, apart from poll tax and shipping dues. He foiled, also, an attempt to impose a Brunei export duty on coal exported from Muara by threatening to

close his mine, which was running at a loss. The revenue rights were eventually surrendered (at a price) to Brunei in 1924, the land rights (apart from a bungalow) only in 1931–32.

The early Residents had other minor successes. The most important bone of contention, of course, was Limbang: and in this case the efforts made on behalf of the Sultanate were wholly unsuccessful. Mr McArthur realized that the restoration of the entire province was probably out of the question: 'This reversal of roles, with the Rajah of Sarawak, instead of the powerless Sultan of Brunei, as victim, would doubtless rouse too great an outcry.'²² Instead, he urged as a matter of vital importance the recovery of at least the left bank. Apart from being Brunei's former 'rice store and richest asset',²³ Limbang afforded the easiest means of communication from Brunei Town to the outdistricts; and Mr McArthur found that goods were being smuggled from *ulu* Tutong and Belait *via* Limbang without any duty being paid to a Government dependent on customs revenue for much of its income. In view of the Rajah's recent 'bitter disappointment' the Colonial Office declined to take any action for the present. When Sir Charles died in 1917 the issue was revived, but it was felt that his successor would suffer a severe blow to his prestige if he were to surrender Limbang so early in his reign; and so nothing was done. The loss of Limbang, however, continued to rankle in Brunei, and in 1970 a public claim was staked to the district.

V

Meanwhile, the early Residents faced the duty of (as they saw it) cleansing the Augean Stables and providing Brunei with a 'proper' administration. Their guiding principle was 'the maximum of justice to the oppressed with the minimum of interference with the rights and susceptibilities of those in power'. The task confronting Mr McArthur and his successors was indeed 'daunting':

With no public expenditure and with a disreputable ruling class scrambling for cash advances from foreign governments or private speculators, seizing all they dare from their luckless subjects, and valuing their position solely as a means of self-indulgence and extravagance, to talk of a Government seems ridiculous. There are no salaried officers, . . . no forces, no police, no public institutions, no coinage, no roads, no public buildings—except a wooden mosque, and—most crying need of all—no gaol. There is a semblance of a judicature, but little justice . . .²⁴

The first necessity was the establishment of an effective central authority whose writ ran throughout the country. The traditional Malay State was a collection of revenue-producing riverine districts, controlled by nobles, who

happened to acknowledge, however reluctantly, a common Sultan. In Brunei there was 'no Government . . . only ownership'. The country was divided up into three sorts of tenure, each carrying with it taxation and administration rights for the owner: *kerajaan* (crown lands), *kuripan* (ministerial lands) and *tulin* (private lands).²⁵ Landlords owned not just the land but the people living on it as well: all Bruneians, apart from most Malays and Chinese, were serfs. A Sultan had little real power except over his own districts and people: he was unable by custom to interfere with the internal administration of other districts. No transfer of sovereignty, however, could take place without his consent; but his poverty was often such that he jumped at the chance to obtain the fee to which he was entitled on any such transfer.

Worse still, succession to the throne did not follow primogeniture but was 'a matter in which many persons believed they had a right to determine the outcome'.²⁶ This caused endless succession disputes and political instability: during the nineteenth century not all Sultans won full acceptance in the sense that all chiefs paid them obeisance, hence allowing them to be 'conferred with majesty' as *Yang Di Pertuan* (Crowned Sultan). Furthermore, a Ruler was supposed to consult his four *wazirs* (senior ministers)—of whom only two remained in office in 1906—in any matter affecting the State and two of their seals were necessary to validate any important State document. Endemic factionalism prevented such consensus and so hindered effective and responsible administration.

Another difficulty was that, as Sarawak and North Borneo encroached further and further, Brunei lost some of its richest areas and the *pengirans* (nobles) had correspondingly fewer people to tax; consequently in the remaining districts, taxation became proportionately heavier, which in turn provoked further revolts by the populace. This had been the problem in Limbang in 1884, and again in Tutong and Belait at the beginning of this century. Some tribesmen, weary of such extortion, appealed to Sarawak for assistance, or fled deep into the jungle in order to escape the attentions of Brunei tax collectors. The Kedayans, on the other hand, achieved sufficient cohesion to prevent excessive financial demands on them.

The Residency went a long way towards abolishing this chaos by taking all land, initially, into State ownership. The Sultan and *wazirs* accepted annual pensions in compensation for the loss of their *kerajaan* and *kuripan* rights. It took over five years, however, before *tulin* claims could be investigated and settled, because some were fraudulent. If genuine, the owner was issued with a title to his land and compensation for the surrender of rights of taxation. A land administration was then begun, receipts from sales or rents being paid into the newly-established public treasury. Serfdom automatically ceased; and, in place of the myriad tax demands invented by *pengirans*, the sole direct levy payable after 1906 was an annual poll tax of two Straits' dollars;²⁷ and some groups were exempt even from this.

Generally speaking, a harmonious relationship existed between Sultan and Resident. As far as I am aware, this land question produced the only occasion when a Sultan was reminded officially of the Treaty requirement that the Resident's advice must be accepted. Sultan Muhammad Jamalul Alam, a youth dominated by the two *wazirs* who were acting as Regents during his minority, obstructed the implementation of the Land Code and, at one point, was threatened with deposition by Sir John Anderson. Later, after the old generation of *wazirs* had passed from the scene, Sultan Muhammad Jamal emerged as an intelligent and progressive monarch, receptive to new ideas, such as the need for schools and vaccination campaigns. In 1920 he was knighted; and the early death of this 'dignified and enlightened Ruler' only four years later was much regretted.

A cardinal feature of British policy, indeed, was the enhancement of the monarchy's prestige and authority, at the expense of the *wazirs*.²⁸ This proved difficult because the *wazirs* assumed the role of Regents during two long minorities (1906-18 and 1924-31). Residents, however, were able to prevent any recurrence of the former political instability caused by factionalism and, by the 1950s, the monarchy had emerged as the most powerful political force in the Sultanate. In accordance with the Will of Sultan Hashim,²⁹ succession now followed the rule of primogeniture *de facto* (although the formality of election persisted). The *wazirs*, while retaining their seats on the State Council, had a largely formal role and played little or no part in the running of the country after 1906. The State Council, a pre-Residency institution, enacted all legislation and had to approve the financial estimates, but in essence it was a rubber stamp for the Resident, certainly before the Pacific War. Its dozen or so members, apart from the Resident, were appointed by the Sultan, and consisted mainly of his relations and people raised up by him.

Having abolished the territorial power of the nobles, the British appointed a 'Malay Magistrate' in each of the four administrative districts. Responsible solely to the Resident, their main duties were the trial of minor cases and the collection of poll tax and customs duties. As time passed their duties became more varied, and, in 1932, their style was changed to 'District Officer'.

VI

The establishment of effective central control made possible another major task of the first Residents: viz., the raising of a revenue for the State. Hitherto there had been no national treasury, the Sultan and *pengirans* using their income for private purposes only: most of it was spent on the upkeep of retainers, the source of a Malay chief's power.

During the years 1906-11 loans totalling \$500,000 (Straits) were arranged from the Federated Malay States. Of this amount \$174,377 were eventually spent on the redemption of 'cession monies'. During the nineteenth century, nobles—in order to alleviate their poverty—had surrendered their districts

one by one to the encroaching Sarawak and North Borneo in return for annual payments, called 'cession money'. The Brunei Government after 1906 bought up as many of these rights as possible, with the result that the receipts benefited the State Exchequer, rather than going into private hands.

Secondly, \$72,009 of loan expenditure were used to redeem 'monopolies'. In some cases the monopoly of trading in certain articles had been granted; in others, the sole right of charging customs duties. Sultan Hashim, desperately short of ready cash, had recklessly alienated to money-lenders, mainly Chinese, virtually all his sources of income, usually for the most inadequate consideration and for as many as twenty (or more) years ahead. This was why Mr McArthur could say that Brunei was more valuable than the Rajah had been admitting: the revenue actually being collected was a mere fraction of that to which the Government was entitled. After 1906, these monopolies were redeemed compulsorily and cheaply, the 'farmer' being paid his purchase money, less an amount proportionate to the number of years the monopoly had already been held. The abolition of the monopoly system had the additional advantage of reducing retail prices in the capital.

Most of the remainder of the F.M.S. loan was devoted to setting the new administration on its feet; \$60,250 were returned unused, so that in 1914 the Brunei National Debt stood at \$439,750, the servicing of which was a heavy burden.

Before the discovery of the Seria oilfield, the economy produced nothing which could generate a substantial income for the Government. The majority of people were subsistence fishermen or *padi*-farmers. Total exports, consisting mainly of coal, catch, sago and rubber, were worth only \$867,190 as late as 1924 (admittedly a lean year, immediately preceding a 'boom' in rubber exports).³⁰ Customs duties accounted for easily the largest single item of Government revenue, followed by receipts from the *chandu* monopoly and cession money. Less significant yields were obtained from licence fees, land rents, interest payments and the sale of postage stamps. In the circumstances the financial achievement was not inconsiderable: annual State income, a mere \$43,539 in 1908, reached a pre-oil peak of \$440,870 in 1927, by which time a start had been made on the repayment of the National Debt. Loans, at fair rates of interest, were also made to the Sultan, in order to help him to redeem mortgaged property and to escape from the clutches of extortionate local moneylenders.

VII

The legal sphere was another area attracting attention. Mr McArthur supervised the enactment of a Penal Code, the creation of a system of courts, and the introduction of Police. The Resident's Court was the highest in the land, but the Supreme Court of the Straits Settlements was entitled to exercise original jurisdiction in capital cases and to hear appeals. Appellants, if they

so desired, could take their petitions to the Privy Council in London. The enforcement of law and order coupled with access to impartial justice were major benefits provided by the Residential System.

Religious cases, on the other hand, remained the province of the *Kathi* (Islamic judge). Muhammadan law was defined rather more narrowly than some leading Malays preferred: in 1906 they presented a petition to the High Commissioner, but it was rejected.

The Police consisted initially of a Straits Settlements' detachment, seconded from Labuan. Especially after the murder of a Resident by a drunk Sikh policeman in 1916, they were gradually replaced by Malays until, on 1 January 1921, a separate Brunei Police Force, 39 strong, came into existence. In fact, there was astonishingly little crime in the Sultanate—and no lawyers—so that the burden of police and court work remained negligible.

VIII

Another important scheme of the Residents was a continuing attempt to persuade the River Villagers to abandon their damp, overcrowded and allegedly unhealthy houses over the water and to settle instead on *terra firma*, where a New Capital grew up around the Government offices and Chinese shophouses. Apart from health considerations, Residents wished to encourage domestic *padi* production, in order to reduce dependence on rice imports. But their efforts, still continuing in the 1950s, produced little result, because most Malays preferred to remain where they were.

IX

On 5 April 1929, oil was struck at Seria; but none was exported until 1932, in the hope that market conditions would become more favourable.³¹ In the following 28 years,³² the oilfield provided the administration with \$340,000,000 in oil royalties alone, transforming Brunei from a debt-ridden backwater into one of the richest countries in the world (in terms of *per capita* G.N.P.).

It appears unlikely that the Residency was established because it was thought there might be oil in Brunei: as late as 1917, for example, a Resident was urging that Belait be exchanged for the return of two other districts bordering Temburong. Fortunately for Brunei, the High Commissioner rejected this advice, but he did so on grounds other than that Belait might contain a rich oilfield.³³

During the years 1907–22 several oil companies prospected in Brunei, but they lacked capital and drive. By 1923 the newly-formed British Malayan Petroleum Company (B.M.P.C.)—owned by the Royal Dutch/Shell group—was the only one left in the field, at a time when both the Brunei Government and the Colonial Office had become defeatist about the prospects for oil

discovery; and so, in order to encourage the B.M.P.C. to continue exploration, the royalty negotiated for any crude oil produced was only two shillings a ton, with an option to take 10% in kind.

Brunei quickly became the third largest oil producer in the British Commonwealth. It was also the most crucial: for, as one British official observed in 1935, 'the whole of the aviation spirit used overseas by the Royal Air Force, and the bulk of the spirit they use in the United Kingdom is drawn from Brunei'.³⁴ It seems, therefore, that Seria oil made a not insignificant contribution to the survival of the United Kingdom during the anxious summer of 1940.³⁵

The B.M.P.C. soon acquired a major role in the Sultanate. The Belait district had been so undeveloped that, before drilling could commence, the company itself had to build wharves for the unloading of supplies, roads to carry drillers and equipment to sites of exploration, and quarters for imported labourers and staff. In addition, the B.M.P.C. provided excellent health and recreational facilities. As a result, Government became totally overshadowed in Belait district: 'the company never tried to set itself up as a rival or to challenge the functions of Government', one official remembered. 'It was just a very big fish in a small pool! One couldn't get away from it!'.³⁶ Furthermore, since communications between Belait and Brunei Town were so tenuous, a distinct polarization developed between the industrial oilfield, inhabited mainly by immigrants, and the subsistence economy of the rather more easy-going, Malay-populated district at the other end of the State.

X

The Residential System was not particularly oppressive.³⁷ As late as 1941 there were only seven British officials stationed in Brunei: the Resident, Assistant-Resident, Chief Police Officer and State Engineer (posts dating back to 1906),³⁸ plus Heads of the Medical (1929), Forestry (1933) and Agriculture (1937) Departments. The Treasurer was Chinese, whilst Malays supervised other Departments. Originally, some European officials, including the Resident, had been shared with Labuan and, if technical advice were required, an expert would be despatched from Malaya. Residents were always unarmed and accessible to anyone with a grievance. Brunei had no armed forces; riots were unknown. The Police Force as late as 1938 numbered 85, whilst Brunei's two gaols at the end of 1935 contained *nine* inmates (only five at the end of 1936);³⁹ and prisoners regarded themselves as public servants rather than convicted felons since they were employed extra-murally performing useful odd jobs. There was not even a rudimentary Special Branch until the 1950s, and that was established after the 1949 Chinese Revolution principally because of fears with regard to the rapidly increasing Chinese minority in the Sultanate. Trade unionism was of no account until 1960 and there appears to have been only one strike which could justify the

name—and that occurred in the exceptional circumstances (food shortages, high cost of living) obtaining in mid-1946. In short, the British held their position in Brunei through the tacit consent of the governed.

A very different situation prevailed under the Japanese. On 16 December 1941 the Kawaguchi Detachment landed at Kuala Belait and within six days the undefended Sultanate had fallen into their hands. Fortunately there had been time to implement the oilfield destruction scheme, thereby denying the wells and installations to the enemy. All Europeans were rounded up and imprisoned in the Batu Lintang (Kuching) death camp, where approximately one-third perished. This was nothing, however, to the fate of 2,400 Allied prisoners, mostly Australians, held in Sandakan, of whom *six* survived to tell the tale.

Whereas British administration in Brunei may not be characterized as harsh, the Japanese came in as masters and ruled by terror, enforcing their will through the *Kempetai*. As G. S. Carter has observed, the 'laws of decency and justice to which they (Borneans) had been accustomed in the past, were supplanted by the persuasion of the rifle butt, the firing squad and the *samurai* sword'.⁴⁰ Many inhabitants, especially the Chinese, fled for their lives into the jungle. As the tide of war turned, the invaders became increasingly brutal and irrational in order to hide their loss of face. Many leading Malays were arrested and tortured as 'British spies'; and, indeed, there were notable acts of heroism which were recognized after the war was over. The declared Japanese policy ('Asia for the Asians') meant, in reality, 'Asia for the Japanese'. In brief, almost four years of Japanese occupation produced little beyond untold misery, fear, starvation and endemic disease.

Those who take the sword, however, tend to perish by the sword: on 10 June 1945 a co-ordinated landing effected by the Ninth Australian Division at Labuan and Muara signalled the beginning of Operation 'Oboe Six' designed to recapture Brunei's oil and rubber resources in preparation for Operation 'Zipper' (the liberation of Malaya) and the invasion of Japan, the latter scheduled for November 1945. The surviving Japanese forces retreated into the interior, where they were eliminated by an indigenous guerrilla force which had been organized and trained by Allied officers in the months preceding the Australian landing. The loyalty of the Borneans is attested by the fact that the Japanese on the coast had not the slightest intimation of its existence. The surrender of the Japanese commander was accepted in September 1945.⁴¹ Sultan Ahmad Tajudin, on the first anniversary of the Australian entry into his capital, referred to the 'liberation' of his territory from the 'evil oppression' of the Japanese; the *pengirans*, it was said, were 'delighted at the return of British protection and influence'.⁴²

Until July 1946 Brunei came under the British Military Administration (British Borneo),⁴³ whose main functions were (a) to distribute relief supplies to the starving, unclothed, disease-ridden populace; and (b) to establish the

rudiments of an administration in preparation for the restoration of civilian rule. The handover was delayed because of uncertainty with regard to the future constitutional set-up in Borneo. Sarawak and North Borneo now became colonies, the Rajah retiring and the Chartered Company going into liquidation. The situation in Brunei was largely unchanged except that, after 1948, the Governor of Sarawak, instead of the Governor of the now-defunct Straits Settlements, became *ex-officio* High Commissioner for Brunei. In addition, the Residents and Department Heads tended also to be drawn from Sarawak rather than Malaya, as formerly. This Sarawak connection was a grievous mistake because, for obvious historical reasons, there was 'a total distrust of all things Sarawakian' in Brunei, and it produced some strain between Sultan and Resident.⁴⁴

The Colonial Office had also laid down three long-term objectives for the post-war era: (a) self-government; (b) closer inter-territorial unity; and (c) the creation of a greater sense of common citizenship between the various races in 'British' Borneo.⁴⁵ The two latter ideals made little progress in strongly Muslim-Malay Brunei, which jealously guarded its new oil wealth; with regard to the first, better educational facilities resulted in Malays occupying more senior posts in the administration. But, in the 1950s, they were swamped by a flood of expatriates.

XI

The first task of the restored civilian administration was the reconstruction of the war-devastated country. Following Allied bombing, intensified after October 1944, all the townships in Brunei except *Kampong Ayer* (River Village) had been flattened. Rebuilding was delayed by shortages of everything: materials, labour, artisans, and professional staff (especially town planners). There was intense competition, moreover, between the Government and the B.M.P.C. for what scarce resources were available: the company, for example, could afford to pay higher wages, which left the Government bereft of labour. The economy, particularly food production, had to be set back on its feet, and services (water, electricity, health and education) restored and expanded.

The oilfield had been set to the torch by the retreating Japanese, and it took some months before the spectacular fires could be controlled. Rehabilitation of the oil wells was accorded highest priority, because of the Commonwealth's urgent need for non-(US) dollar oil. Production quickly equalled pre-War levels (685,257 tons annually in 1938) and then rocketed to new heights, scaling an annual level of five million tons during the mid-1950s. This expansion, along with the introduction of company income tax (1950) and an enhanced rate of royalty, caused an 'almost fantastic'⁴⁶ increase in annual Government revenue, from \$4.3 million in 1947 to \$98 million six years later. In 1953 'Reconstruction' was declared at an end and

the State Council voted \$100 million for a five-year Development Plan, designed to introduce a Welfare State.

Before the War, Government had been run on a shoestring because there was little money and budgets were expected to balance (and they did, usually). At that time there were no welfare loans available from the Colonial Office. Even during the 1930s a cautious financial and social policy was pursued because the true extent of the oilfield had not yet been realized and the administration feared to assume burdens which might prove difficult to shoulder if the oil wells were quickly exhausted.⁴⁷ First priority was accorded to paying off the National Debt, which had been achieved by 1936. As a result only modest progress had been made towards the provision of social services before the arrival of the Japanese.

In 1906 there had been no school or hospital in the country. By 1941 there were 24 Malay primary schools with 1,746 pupils and several private establishments run by the Christian Missions or the Chinese community. In the medical field, an intermittent service was provided initially from Labuan, but there was no Government hospital or doctor in Brunei until 1929. Vaccination campaigns, however, prevented any repetition of the disastrous cholera (1902) and smallpox (1904) epidemics, the latter alone proving fatal for perhaps 9–10% of River Villagers.⁴⁸ Travelling dispensaries brought medical care to remote villages, whilst permanent health centres were found in the larger townships. The incidence of malaria had been reduced to a minimum in the main settlements, though it remained prevalent elsewhere; other diseases, such as tuberculosis, were more difficult to eliminate. The most pressing problem of all was infant mortality: at one stage almost every other infant failed to survive beyond the first year; but with improved midwifery and maternal care, the rate had been improved to one in ten by 1959. Finally, it should be borne in mind that there was little demand or enthusiasm on the part of Bruneians for Government educational or medical services: a major difficulty—or so it was claimed—was to overcome traditional resistance to such new-fangled foreign ideas.

The largest single area of Government expenditure before 1941 was public works. Effort was concentrated on public buildings and a few primitive roads and bridle paths, the latter liable to be washed away by tropical rains. The construction of a wireless telegraph station in 1920–21 was regarded as a 'major' project. Electricity and piped water also became available by the 1930s; and permanent brick buildings began to be built in 1932, because this was thought cheaper over the longer term.

During the Japanese era most of the gains already made in social services were lost; and the immediate post-war years resulted in little more than the restoration of the *status quo ante bellum*. The 1953–58 Development Plan, however, was comprehensive in its scope, including the rapid expansion of medical and educational facilities, improved communications (roads, telephones, an airport and a National Radio Station), the introduction of

non-contributory pensions for the elderly and disabled, the expansion of water and electricity supplies, and assistance for the craftsman, small holder and *ulu*-dweller. The implementation of the Plan was hampered by all the shortages which had hindered Reconstruction after 1946: in short, 'the money was there, but nothing else'.⁴⁹ Some of the schemes have had disappointing long-term results: for example, the craft industries (brass and silver) and smallholder rubber planting have virtually died out. On the whole, however, the Plan was fulfilled 'astonishingly well, astonishingly on time and astonishingly within estimate'.⁵⁰ Its lasting monument is the magnificent multi-million dollar Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque, which towers in all its glory over the River Village.

A major aim of the Development Plan was to reduce dependence on the oil industry in preparation for the day when oil wells would be exhausted. It was essential that the new wealth should not be wasted on handouts, but should be used to diversify the economy, so that wealthcreating industries would exist in the country when the oil ran out. Here again, the results were disappointing: light industry was not attracted to Brunei. Fortunately, however, in 1963 a new oil reservoir was discovered offshore; and, following the oil price rises of the 1970s, Brunei has become so wealthy that the problem is unlikely to arise for many years to come.

XII

In 1956 the first major political party appeared on the scene and rapidly won overwhelming public support. The *Partai Rakyat Brunei* (Brunei People's Party) sought independence and the reunification of *Kalimantan Utara* ('British' Borneo) under the Sultan. Factors involved in the rise of nationalism included the destruction of British prestige by the Japanese; the increased literacy of Brunei people and the rise of a small intelligentsia who realized that they could govern the country just as well as any expatriate Briton; the example of India, Indonesia and Malaya which had thrown off imperialist domination; the increasing contrast between the wealthy Government and oil company on the one hand and the continued poverty of many ordinary people on the other; and, not least, the emergence of a charismatic nationalist leader, *Saudara* Ahmad Azahari, a 'spell-binder of a public speaker', who embodied the aspirations of many Bruneians.⁵¹

Sir Omar Ali Saifuddin (Sultan 1950-67) appeared to prefer a far more gradual approach to constitutional reform than was being pressed on him both by British advisers and by the *Partai Rakyat*; on this issue he was not to be forced against his will, and there was little the Resident or High Commissioner could do about it. Sir Omar wished to consolidate each step before moving on to the next; with the result that virtually no steps were taken at all, apart from the establishment of 'District Advisory Councils', which later sent representatives to an enlarged State Council. At the same time the

perceived subordination of Brunei's interests to those of Sarawak caused some tension between the Sultan and the High Commissioner. Hence, when power was transferred by the British in 1959, it was transferred overwhelmingly to the Sultan, not to the people;⁵² and the link with Sarawak was abolished, the Sultanate receiving its own resident High Commissioner, responsible directly to the British Government. Sultan Omar Ali, meanwhile, had been promoting his own brand of somewhat intolerant Muslim Malay nationalism: he sought closer ties with his cousins in Malaya, rather than with his predominantly non-Muslim neighbours in Borneo as the British Government hoped at this time. In retrospect, taking into account the post-colonial history of many countries, Sultan Omar Ali's cautious approach to constitutional reform may have been wiser than his British advisers appreciated at the time.

XIII

In conclusion, the British Residency in Brunei first and foremost ensured the continued existence of the Sultanate as a separate State; indeed, this was the principal reason why a British presence there was tolerated at all. Initially, further Brooke encroachment was prevented and the exactions of the *pengiran*s abolished. The country was given stability, a sound financial administration, a new system of justice, and, not least, a totally incorrupt public service. In the latter respect, Sir Omar Ali and his Malay ministers set an impeccable example. The capital and technical expertise of the B.M.P.C. made possible the discovery and exploitation of the Seria oilfield, which provided the revenues necessary to finance the introduction of a Welfare State in the 1950s. Failures included the continued poverty of many Bruneians, the failure to obtain the return of Limbang, the failure to defend the country in 1941, the failure to diversify the economy and the failure to implant British traditions of constitutional monarchy and democracy. Generally, however, these failures concern things which cannot be achieved overnight. On the positive side, a country which had been bankrupt with virtually no income at all in 1906, was left in 1959 with an annual revenue approaching \$130,000,000 and reserves to the tune of \$600,000,000. Many people lived in houses provided with running water and electricity; and the use of modern gadgetry was spreading. The rising generation was largely literate (75% of the 10-14 age group in 1960) and far healthier than their grandparents had been at the same age. Malaria, along with other killer diseases apart from tuberculosis, had been virtually eliminated. Hence an outside observer (Tunku Abdul Rahman) was able to describe Brunei in 1958 as the '*Shangri-la* of the East'.⁵³ Finally, scarcely three years after Brunei resumed responsibility for its internal affairs, the People's Party rose up in revolt; and, after British forces despatched from Singapore had restored the situation, any intention to move towards a democratic system of government was abandoned.

Notes

I should like to thank *Datuk* R. N. Turner, S.P.D.K., C.M.G. and Mr E. R. Bevington, C.M.G., C.Eng., for permission to use certain quotations. I am particularly grateful, also, to Dr D. K. Bassett for his comments and suggestions.

- 1 Point owed to Mr R. Nicholl, 'Brunei Rediscovered' (Typescript, most kindly supplied by its author, of a Paper read at the Eighth Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia, held at Kuala Lumpur, 25-29 August 1980).
- 2 The Treaty was signed by Sultan Hashim and the *wazirs* on 3 December 1905 and by Sir John Anderson, representing the British Crown, on 2 January 1906: hence the reference to one 1905-06 Treaty.
- 3 *Brunei Annual Report 1946*: p. 82. The original draft Treaty included the words 'and custom' after 'the Muhammadan religion', but these were omitted from the signed version. See F.O. 12/128 p. 12.
- 4 F.O. 572/39 M. S. H. McArthur: 'Report on Brunei in 1904', dated Singapore 5 December 1904, para. 23.
- 5 C.O. 824/2 *Brunei Annual Report 1938*: p. 2.
- 6 L. R. Wright, *The Origins of British Borneo* (Hong Kong, 1970). See also N. Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah* (Oxford University Press, K.L., 1978), pp. 63, 132, 226, 235 and 238.
- 7 C.O. 144/79 (10323): minute by G. V. Fiddes (1858-1936), 15 April 1905.
- 8 F.O. 12/78: minutes by Sir R. Herbert (p. 165) and by Lord Salisbury (p. 151).
- 9 As note 4 (above), para. 83.
- 10 *Ibid.*, para. 80.
- 11 Composite taken from F.O. 12/83 p. 103: Sultan Hashim to Queen Victoria, telegram, 18 December 1890; and C.O. 144/69 (4396) Sultan Hashim to Queen Victoria (? early 1893).
- 12 F.O. 12/95 pp. 21ff, minute by Sir G. Dallas.
- 13 For example, C.O. 144/79 (10323); and F.O. 12/128 pp. 408ff.
- 14 As note 4 (above), para. 116.
- 15 *Ibid.*, para. 105.
- 16 C.O. 144/79 (10323) Sir John Anderson (1858-1918) to Marquess of Lansdowne (1845-1927), no. 3 (confidential), 18 February 1905, para. 5.
- 17 Constitutionally, Brunei and Labuan remained separate, although they shared certain officials in common: Brunei was a nominally-independent Malay State, whilst Labuan—one of the Straits Settlements—reverted to the Crown Colony status it had enjoyed between 1847 and 1890. After the Pacific War, Labuan was incorporated within North Borneo (now Sabah).
- 18 As note 16 (above), para. 10.
- 19 This was actually the phrase of Mr C. A. Bampfylde (1856-1918), one of the Rajah's most trusted advisers. See S. Baring-Gould and C. A. Bampfylde: *A History of Sarawak* (London, 1909), p. 326. Mr A. B. Ward comments similarly, *Rajah's Servant* (Cornell, 1966), p. 20. Sir Charles Brooke would not have dissented.
- 20 C.O. 144/81 (3460) Sir Charles Brooke to Foreign Office, 23 January 1906.
- 21 C.O. 144/81 (35280) Anderson to Earl of Elgin, no. 13 (Brunei), 27 August 1906, para. 5. (The Earl of Elgin, 1849-1917, was Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1905-08.)
- 22 C.O. 144/80 (10206) McArthur to Anderson, 13 February 1906, para. 13.
- 23 C.O. 531/4 (20919) minute by W. H. Lee-Warner, 2 July 1912. (Mr Lee-Warner, b. 1880, O.B.E. 1928, d.?, was Assistant-Resident in Brunei from 1910 until 1914, apart from the year 1912, when he was seconded to the Colonial office).

- 24 As note 4 (above), para. 55.
 25 For a more detailed analysis, see Professor D. E. Brown, *Brunei: The Structure and History of a Bornean Malay Sultanate* (Monograph of the Brunei Museum, 1970), pp. 79–85.
 26 *Ibid.*, p. 102.
 27 After 1906 one Straits' dollar was worth 2s 4d (11.66p).
 28 C.O. 531/11 (50598) G. E. Cator to High Commissioner, no. 2 (confidential), 30 April 1917, paragraph 6. (Sir G. E. Cator, 1884–1973, was British Resident in Brunei 1916–21, and later, 1933, Resident in Perak).
 29 C.O. 144/80 (26871) Will of Sultan Hashim, 20 *Safar* 1324 A.H. (14 April 1906).
 30

Year	Rubber Exports (1)	Total Exports (2)	(1) as percentage of (2)
	(\$ Straits)		
1924	387,793	867,190	44.72
1925	1,318,218	1,859,736	70.88
1926	1,032,055	1,651,048	62.51
1927	892,627	1,443,703	61.83
1931	161,204	501,494	32.14

Source: Compiled by author from Annual Reports. (C.O. 824/1–2).

- 31 C.O. 717/92 (File 92395/1932) B.M.P.C. to Crown Agents, 8 September, 1932.
 32 Not including the years of Japanese Occupation (1942–45) and British Military Administration (1945–46).
 33 C.O. 531/11 (10824) Sir Arthur Young to Mr W. Long, Secret, 29 December 1917, para. 16. Sir Arthur commented that if Belait were exchanged for Trusan and Lawas, the people 'would feel that they had been inconsiderately treated if they were handed over as part of a business transaction, and it would tend to disquiet the inhabitants of other districts of Brunei'.
 34 C.O. 717/110 (51535/1935) minute by (Sir) G. E. J. Gent (1895–1948), 19 March 1935.
 35 I regret that I have been unable to obtain definite information on this point. Incredible as it may appear, neither the R.A.F. Museum at Hendon, nor the Ministry of Defence (Air Historical Branch) have any figures detailing the sources whence the Royal Air Force derived its fuel in 1940–41. It may be assumed, however, that wartime consumption was far higher than it had been in 1935 and that the proportion obtained from Brunei declined accordingly. Further, after Brunei itself fell to the Japanese at the end of 1941 (thereby cutting off oil exports to the United Kingdom), the R.A.F. continued to operate; clearly, therefore, Seria oil cannot have been of such overwhelming importance by that time as it had been in 1935. Finally, *Datuk* R. N. Turner, S.P.D.K., C.M.G. (Assistant-Resident, Brunei 1940–41) commented that he was not aware that the R.A.F. 'was so dependent on Brunei for its needs' as suggested by G. E. J. Gent in 1935 (letter to the author, 14 August, 1983).
 36 *Ibid.*
 37 This is not to deny that atrocities were committed by the British in Borneo at other times; nor that the power of the Royal Navy was always in the background.
 38 The post of Assistant-Resident was abolished during the years 1914–31. For most of the pre-WWI era, this officer was the only European Government servant

- permanently resident in the Sultanate. At the beginning of 1913 he was joined by a British 'Superintendent of Customs and Monopolies' (E. G. Goldfinch), styled 'Treasurer' 1915-19.
- 39 During 1935 a total of 30 people were imprisoned at one time or another (cf. 25 in 1936 and 41 in 1937). The worst year appears to have been 1954, when 179 people were imprisoned (but cf. 44 in 1952 and 43 in 1955; 1953 n.a.).
 - 40 Major G. S. Carter, D.S.O., *A Tragedy of Borneo* (Kuala Belait, 1958) p. 7. (Major Carter, a New Zealander, was one of the officers who parachuted into the interior of Borneo to organize the indigenous guerrilla force.)
 - 41 See W.O. 203/2689 and W.O. 203/2690.
 - 42 C.O. 537/1613 item 214A Sultan to H.M. the King, telegram, 6 July 1946; and *Ibid.*, item 227 Governor-General to C.O. no. 94 (telegram), 18 July 1946.
 - 43 W.O. 203/2400 (Final Report of the British Military Administration, by Brigadier C. F. C. Macaskie).
 - 44 Various sources.
 - 45 CAB 98/41 War Cabinet (Attlee) Committee on Malaya and Borneo: memorandum by Mr O. Stanley (C.O.): 'Draft Directive on Policy in Borneo' dated 18 January 1944; see also C.O. 825/43 (File 55104/15), items 22 and 28.
 - 46 C.O. 943/1 file 18: minute by Sir Gerald Whiteley, 27 October 1949.
 - 47 E.g. C.O. 717/129 (51535/1938) memorandum by Mr J. G. Black, 31 January 1938.
 - 48 See A. V. M. Horton, 'The Brunei Smallpox Epidemic of 1904' in *Sarawak Museum Journal* (forthcoming).
 - 49 Mr E. R. Bevington, C.M.G., C.Eng: recording made for the author, 24 July 1983. (Mr Bevington, b. 1914, was Development Commissioner in Brunei, 1954-58.)
 - 50 *Ibid.*
 - 51 Mr Bevington recollected that it had been the Government's policy to lend Sheikh Azahari money for his business ventures—to 'get him involved in something worthwhile'—in the hope that 'he would become more interested in money-making than politics'. If so, the ploy failed.
 - 52 The Constitution, promulgated on 29 September 1959, established an Executive Council and made provision for a partially-elected Legislative Council. Elections were eventually held in August 1962, one year behind schedule, the People's Party winning all the seats. After the uprising which took place in December that year the party was outlawed.
 - 53 *Borneo Bulletin*, 4 October 1958.

[The text in this image is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a multi-paragraph document, possibly a letter or a report, but the content cannot be discerned.]

THE PHILIPPINES

THE PATRIOT

THE PHILIPPINES

B. R. Pearn

Source: F. C. Jones, Hugh Borton and B. R. Pearn, *Survey of International Affairs 1939-46*, vol. 7, *The Far East 1942-46*, London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1955), pp. 301-7.

By 15 August 1945 the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines had already been re-established in the islands, and the Commonwealth Congress had met for the first time for four years. For the time being, however, the effective administration had remained in the hands of the United States army, since the islands were the principal base for the impending attack on Japan, and the Commonwealth Government, which was without money and without real authority, had remained little more than a spectator of events. Even after the surrender of Japan the burden of responsibility still lay to a great extent on the shoulders of the United States, since her Government had accepted the financial liability for the rehabilitation of the Philippines and had thereby also incurred the duty of taking a hand again in the administration. On 26 October 1945, more than two months after the end of hostilities, the President of the United States directed his High Commissioner in the Philippines to investigate the agrarian problem, which was at least as troublesome in the Philippine Commonwealth as it was elsewhere in South-East Asia. He also directed his Attorney-General to investigate the records of Filipinos who had collaborated with the Japanese and, where proper, to lay charges against them; and he gave orders to other United States authorities to take measures for the issue of surplus stores to the Commonwealth Government, to propose legislation for the assistance of demobilized Filipino soldiers, to provide the shipping necessary for the trade of the islands, and to take other steps needed for economic recovery.

However, in spite of this extensive American interest in the domestic affairs of the Philippines, there was no reversal at Washington of the long-established policy whereby the Commonwealth was to become an independent state on 4 July 1946; and thus the situation in the Philippines was fundamentally different from that in other colonial areas of South-East Asia.

The Government which was reinstated and which took over responsibility from the United States army, upon the winding up of the latter's war-time commitments in the Philippines, was a national government, and all vestiges of the colonial system in the political field were about to disappear. Though the Philippines could not escape some of the troubles common to South-East Asia in the post-war era, they had the advantage of escaping any serious conflict between the indigenous people and the former metropolitan Power.

During the first few months after the restoration of peace the Filipino Government was led by Sergio Osmena, who had succeeded Manuel Quezon as President of the Government in exile in 1944. There was, however, an acute rivalry between President Osmena and his supporters who had served him in exile, on the one hand, and political leaders who had remained in the Philippines on the other. The most prominent of the latter group was Manuel Roxas, who had been a member of the Independence Preparatory Committee which, under Japanese auspices, had drafted a new Constitution for the state, and who had later become a Minister without portfolio in the Japanese-controlled Government. Roxas was regarded with suspicion by the more radical groups in the Philippines on account of his collaborationist record, but he had considerable support in the legislature, where the influence of the wealthy landowners tended to prevail. In Luzon, in particular, many members of the land-owning class had, for the sake of preserving their property, given some degree of support to the Japanese, and there was a consequent antagonism between them and the returned Government. Moreover, they adopted in general a conservative attitude in politics, while many members of the resistance movement tended to a Left-wing point of view and now supported the relatively liberal President Osmena.

There was criticism in some quarters, in the United States as well as in the Philippines, of the immunity which Roxas and other collaborators managed to obtain. It was complained that the policy, previously announced by President Roosevelt, of removing from public life all those who had helped the enemy was not being adhered to, and that, so far from that, the United States army had shown favour to the collaborators. It was suggested that American policy was now to restore a pre-war political and social situation that had benefited the United States' commercial and financial interests in the Philippines as well as the local magnates, and that the tendency was to rely still on the landlords and the wealthy class in general.¹ The presence of a strongly 'leftist' element in the resistance movement may have done something to foster this attitude.

As against this, it was no doubt a fact that the services of the wealthy and influential Filipinos were useful to the reoccupying forces, and, besides, the collaborators had an apologia to present. They asserted that in fact they had been helping the United States forces even before the country had been reconquered. They had, they maintained, made use of a façade of collaboration as a means of obtaining intelligence and imparting this to the United

States forces; and General MacArthur certainly absolved Roxas from the stigma of collaboration and stated that he had in truth provided valuable information. On the other hand, it appeared also to be true that although, as directed by President Truman, the United States Attorney-General instituted an investigation into the records of Filipinos accused of collaboration, his report was never published.

Whatever the truth might be, Roxas and his supporters were enabled to play a prominent part in public life, and to weaken President Osmena's position by such means as using their majority in the legislature to veto appointments which he wished to make. Osmena had also to bear the unpopularity which inevitably arose from the frustration of hopes that the end of the war would bring with it an immediate relief from shortages of clothing and other commodities. Thus the influence of Roxas grew, and when, on 23 April 1946, elections were held to fill the offices of President and Vice-President and to select members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, Roxas and his party prevailed. Roxas was chosen President by 1,333,392 votes as against 1,129,996 cast for Osmena.

The first President of the independent Republic of the Philippines was thus Manuel Roxas, who was in office when on 4 July 1946 the President of the United States issued a proclamation of the independence of the Philippines in accordance with the provisions of the Philippines Independence Act of 1934, which had provided for the cessation of the United States' control over the Philippines after a ten years' transitional period in which they were to be governed as a Commonwealth.² By the President's proclamation the United States surrendered 'all rights of possession, supervision, jurisdiction, control, or sovereignty'. On 2 July 1946 the President had already approved legislation releasing Filipino troops from the service of the United States.

The attainment of independence necessitated agreements between the Philippines and the United States on the question of their future economic relations. The United States Congress adopted in 1946 the Philippines Trade Act, which provided that there should be free trade between the two countries until 1954, and that thereafter customs should be gradually increased by the United States until in 1974 full rates of duty would be chargeable. During the period in which no customs dues were to be levied, a system of quotas was to be applied by the United States to certain Philippine products such as sugar, coconut oil, and tobacco.

Though the agreement between the two Governments providing for the application of this Act was approved by the Philippines legislature, it was not accepted without criticism. It was objected that the effect would be to reimpose the pre-war economic system, under which the economy of the Philippines had been inextricably linked with that of the United States and their prosperity had been dependent on their American trade. The initial period of free trade would, it was suggested, enable the producers of primary materials to revive their previous methods, and, as in former days, the

Philippines would drift into the role of a producer of raw materials for the United States market, without any prospect of developing their own industries. Besides this, objection was taken to a provision in the Act and in the agreement, throwing open the exploitation of the natural resources of the islands to citizens of the United States as well as to Filipinos. Apart from other considerations, this provision was a blow to Filipino national pride, since no reciprocal rights were granted to Filipino nationals in the United States. It was clear, however, that the continuance of United States aid in the rehabilitation of the Philippines was dependent on the acceptance of the agreement, and therefore it was adopted.³ Some further criticism was aroused by the fact that the adoption of the provision permitting American economic enterprise in the Philippines required an amendment to the Constitution of the Philippines, and, although the Constitution itself required a three-quarters' majority in the legislature for any amendment, the amendment was in fact eventually passed by a simple majority only.

In general, there was a certain feeling that, although the Philippines had attained political independence, the effect of the trade agreement would be to keep them in economic subjection to the United States.

An agreement on military matters was also required. On 22 June 1945 the Commonwealth Congress had authorized the President to open negotiations with the United States Government in regard to the maintenance of American military bases in the Philippines. There was little objection in the Philippines to the presence of United States installations and garrisons in the country, for in effect the Philippines were thus relieved of the burden of national defence. The United States affirmed her intention of defending the Philippines by Public Law No. 454, of 26 June 1946, whereby the President was authorized to provide aid to the Philippines Government in 'establishing and maintaining national security' and to arrange for 'participation by that government in such defensive operations as the future may require'.

The attainment of independence by the Philippines was not regarded as absolving the United States from the responsibility of giving aid in their rehabilitation. The country had suffered severely in the original campaign of 1941-2, when the Japanese had expelled the United States forces, and again during the American reconquest. The normal pattern of trade and economic life, moreover, had been disrupted by the severing of communications with non-Japanese territories. The United States recognized their responsibility for the rehabilitation of territories which they had proved unable to defend, and in 1946 the United States Congress empowered a United States War Damage Commission to expend \$400 million in the Philippines in compensation for American and Filipino claims. It also provided for the transfer to the Philippines of surplus stores to the value of \$100 million and allotted \$120 million for the restoration and improvement of public property and essential services, including roads and bridges, ports and harbours, public health, and education. Generous though the aid given by the United States was, many

Filipinos felt that still more ought to have been done for them; they complained that the total sums provided by the United States amounted to less than 20 per cent. of the damage suffered in the Philippines by private property during the war, and to less than 10 per cent. of that suffered by public property.⁴ On the other hand, it is evident that no Government can ever shoulder pecuniary liability for all the adverse effects of enemy conquest.

The settlement of the relations between the Philippines and the United States in these various fields was carried on in an atmosphere of rising political tension in the Philippines. The effects of war in the Philippines were no different from those in other countries. There, as elsewhere, there was an increase in the tendency to unrest among the less prosperous classes, and some of these now had the advantage of possessing military equipment and organization. In particular, many of the peasants of Central Luzon, which, for decades past, had been an area of agrarian unrest, were now united in the Hukbalahap army, which had played a major part in the Filipino resistance movement. The Hukbalahaps derived their strength from agrarian unrest, but their leaders were mostly Communists. They had carried on a determined resistance to the enemy throughout the war, and had succeeded in preventing the Japanese from ever occupying Central Luzon. In the areas which they had held the Hukbalahaps had attempted measures of economic reform. The estates of collaborators, if not of others, had been annexed and divided among the tenants, and in other cases the worst abuses of the current agrarian régime had been remedied by the adoption of a more equitable division of the crop than the former system, by which half of it had gone to the landlord. In general, the power of the landlords in these areas had been destroyed.

The post-war Government of the Philippines were thus confronted with an embarrassing problem. The expropriated landowners denounced the Hukbalahaps as bandits; and the reforms which had been introduced had no legal validity. Yet the case for agrarian reform was strong, and the peasants who had secured some measure of improvement in their lot during the war were loath to forgo their gains now that the war was over. The United States forces were thus in a difficult position in the initial stages of the reoccupation. They were responsible for law and order and could not countenance forcible expropriation of property. Moreover, the Hukbalahaps had set up their own administration in the areas under their control, and showed no sign of abandoning it on the return of the Commonwealth authorities. Thus the relations between the United States army and the Hukbalahaps were strained.

President Osmena was in favour of reform, and he proposed that the tenant should receive 60 per cent. of the crop. President Roxas likewise declared himself favourable to reform, though he also accused the Hukbalahaps of seeking to gain power by force. In July 1946 discussions were started between the President and the Hukbalahap leaders. Roxas stated that he was in favour

of the principle that the tenant should receive 70 per cent. of the crop, provided that he bore all the costs of production. He also expressed his willingness to introduce remedial legislation, providing for the gradual abolition of share cropping and for its replacement by a system of fixed rents, and he proposed that the Government should purchase large estates and should divide them up for sale on easy terms among the peasantry. Anti-usury laws were contemplated, and also a scheme for the colonization of undeveloped areas. On the other hand, the President declared that his Government could not countenance armed resistance to their authority, and he demanded that the Hukbalahaps should lay down their arms.

These discussions produced little result, for the Hukbalahaps mistrusted the Government and were not prepared to disarm and so place themselves, as they saw it, once more at the mercy of the landowners and the Government.

While these negotiations were going on, disorder was increasing. There were said at this time to be 80,000 Hukbalahaps under arms, and on 13 July it was reported that 1,500 Filipino troops, supported by artillery, had been sent to Central Luzon to restore order. Early in August the disturbances spread to the provinces of Tayabas and Laguna, which had so far been peaceful; and on 24 August President Roxas demanded that all illicit arms, estimated to total 100,000, including a number of field guns, should be surrendered by the end of the month. Little attention was paid to this ultimatum, and in September a state of open civil war developed.

Thus, by the end of 1946, though the Philippines had achieved their political independence, they were still faced with a number of grave problems. The process of rehabilitation had by no means reached completion, and much remained to be done before the country could regain its former prosperity, while the domestic political scene was being troubled by a violent conflict which had its roots deep in the whole structure of the Filipino social system.

Notes

- 1 American Institute of Pacific Relations: *The Development of Self-Rule and Independence in Burma, Malaya, and the Philippines* (New York, American I.P.R. January 1948, mimeographed), p. 91.
- 2 See *Survey* for 1933, pp. 554 seqq.
- 3 See Lennox A. Mills and others: *The New World of South East Asia* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1949), p. 62.
- 4 *Ibid.* p. 60.

AMERICAN POLICY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Abraham Chapman

Source: *Far Eastern Survey* 15(11) (1946): 164-9.

The fundamental features of American postwar policy in the Philippines have already crystallized. After considerable deliberation, drafting and redrafting, the basic legislation governing future American trade relations with the Islands and U.S. rehabilitation policy has been adopted by Congress and signed by President Truman.¹

Discussions on the implementation of this legislation and the future economic and political relations between the United States and the Philippines have been initiated in Washington. President-elect Manuel A. Roxas and American High Commissioner Paul V. McNutt flew to Washington early in May for this purpose and conferred with President Truman. But the dominant trend of American policy in the Philippines today is already firmly established.

Historically speaking two conflicting lines of policy contended for dominance in America's relations with the Philippines ever since the Islands were acquired as a colonial possession. One stressed the dependence of the Islands on the United States within the framework of an American colonial empire. The other, articulated by the Anti-Imperialist League and others in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, insisted upon the independence of the Philippines from the very inception of American relations with the Islands. The intensity and popular base of the Philippine independence orientation are reflected in the sharp and vigorous language of the Philippine plank of the Democratic Party's national platform of 1900, which was restated time and again in subsequent national Democratic platforms.

Declaring that it regarded "the burning issue of Imperialism growing out of the Spanish war" as "the paramount issue of the campaign" the Democratic platform of 1900 declared:²

We condemn and denounce the Philippine policy of the present Administration. It has involved the Republic in unnecessary war, sacrificed the lives of many of our noblest sons and placed the United States, previously known and applauded throughout the world as the champion of freedom, in the false and un-American position of crushing with military force the efforts of our former allies to achieve liberty and self-government. . . . We favor an immediate declaration of the nation's purpose to give to the Filipinos, first, a stable form of government; second, independence; and third, protection from outside interference.

Roots of independence movement

The deep-rooted Filipino independence movement came into being in the fight against Spanish colonial domination. The nineteenth century witnessed repeated Filipino independence revolts against the tyrannical Spanish rule, culminating in the Filipino Revolution of 1896, initiated by the popular leader Andres Bonifacio with his Cry of Balintawak. The Filipinos established a short-lived republic of their own, subsequently defeated by American arms which battled the Filipino independence movement for three years and finally established American hegemony over the Islands.

Throughout the past four decades and more of American control of the Islands the Filipino aspiration for independence insistently came to expression as the most consistent political demand of the Filipino people. The viewpoint embodied in the Democratic platform of 1900 mirrored American popular opposition, at the turn of the century, to the course of colonial expansion, upon which the United States had embarked, as well as support of the Filipino independence movement.

Official American policy towards the Philippines seesawed between promises of independence soon and definite denials of the readiness and the ability of the Filipinos to assume independent government or indefinite postponement of the promise of independence, varying with the Administration in power and the prevailing legislative majorities.

As far back as 1916 the Jones Law³ committed America to the independence of the Philippines, as follows:

It is, as it always has been, the purpose of the people of the United States to withdraw their sovereignty over the Philippine Islands and to recognize their independence as soon as a stable government can be established therein.

On April 4, 1919, Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War in the Wilson Administration, officially greeted a Philippine Independence mission on

behalf of President Wilson, who was then in Europe, with the following assertion of American policy:⁴

I know that I express the feeling of the President, I certainly express my own feeling—I think I express the prevailing feeling in the United States—when I say that we believe the time has substantially come, if not quite come, when the Philippine Islands can be allowed to sever the mere formal political tie remaining and become an independent people.

Only two years later, however, the Wood-Forbes report recommended the continuance of American rule and an indefinite postponement of Philippine independence, although it noted:⁵

The great bulk of the Christian Filipinos have a very natural desire for independence . . . The Americans in the Islands are practically a unit for the continuance of American control.

By 1924 President Coolidge's messages declared bluntly that American policy, for an unspecified length of time, was opposed to Philippine independence:⁶

It is to be doubted whether with the utmost exertion, the most complete solidarity among themselves, the most unqualified and devoted patriotism, it would be possible for the people of the Islands to maintain an independent place in the world for an indefinite future . . .

The American Government is convinced that it has the overwhelming support of the American Nation in its conviction that present independence would be a misfortune and might easily become a disaster to the Filipino people. Upon that conviction the policy of this Government is based.

On April 6, 1927, President Coolidge turned down the demand of the Filipino people for a plebiscite on the question of Philippine independence. In his official message he declared that the United States would not "yield to the Philippine aspiration for national independence."⁷ In the same message he declared further: "Independence is an intangible ideal which has often brought disillusionment and disaster in its train."⁸

Under the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt American policy resumed the line of Philippine independence initially embodied in the Jones Law of 1916 and set a date for the establishment of the Philippine Republic—July 4, 1946. The Tydings-McDuffie Act⁹ was adopted on March 24, 1934. It provided for the establishment of the Commonwealth of the

Philippines as a ten-year transitional form of government to culminate in full independence.

Throughout this transition period, both before and after the war in the Pacific, American opponents of Philippine independence have continuously demanded a "re-examination" of America's commitment to Philippine independence. Paul V. McNutt, present American High Commissioner to the Philippines, is viewed by many sections of Filipino public opinion as one of the most prominent "re-examinationists." The pressure of the "re-examinationists" had a profound influence on the Philippine legislation finally adopted by Congress this year.

Position of American capital

If American policy has contradicted itself with regard to our political relations with the Islands, it has been singularly consistent insofar as economic relations are concerned. American capital flowed into the Islands assuming a commanding position in the economic life of the archipelago and in the exploitation of its rich sugar, gold, hemp, coconut and tobacco resources. American investments in the islands are now estimated at \$258,564,000.¹⁰

As Philippine sugar and other products entered the United States, American economic interests which felt the competition of the products coming from the Philippines sought to weaken or dispose of the threatened Philippine competition. Americans with interests in Puerto Rican and Cuban sugar, American dairy interests fearing the competition of Philippine coconut oil, and others supported the independence of the Philippines out of a cold cash interest in the elimination of the competition brought about by the Philippine products.

Congressman C. Jasper Bell, chairman of the Insular Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, described American economic policy towards the Islands as follows, in a memorandum to the House Committee on Ways and Means in reference to the Philippine Trade Act. Congressman Bell said, in part:¹¹

Since 1909, the economy of the Philippine Islands has been effectively tied to that of the United States. This was accomplished by the establishment of free trade between the two countries. This was done over the protest of the Filipino people through their representatives in the Philippine Assembly which, on March 27, 1909, adopted a joint resolution petitioning Congress not to establish free trade on the ground that:

"Free trade between the United States and the Islands would in the future become highly prejudicial to the economic interests of the Philippine people and would bring about a situation which might hinder the attainment of the independence of the said people."

The fears expressed in that resolution have been justified, because as a result of the establishment of free trade between the two countries the Philippines became almost entirely dependent upon United States markets for the disposition of their products. This made more difficult the assumption of an independent status by the Philippines.

High Commissioner Paul V. McNutt was remarkably frank in explaining the essence of American economic policy in the Philippines in a statement he made at the hearings of the House Ways and Means Committee. McNutt declared:¹²

In the Philippines the national economy was geared before the war entirely and completely to export trade. And 95 percent of that export trade was with the United States. Except for rice and fish, which are locally consumed, 98 percent of all other production in the Philippines, amounting to \$266,000,000 in 1941, is produced for export . . .

And I might and should say here and now that we, the United States, managed it that way. We are responsible for the sole dependency of the Philippines on the American market. Our businessmen and our statesmen in past years allowed the Philippines to become a complete economic dependency of the United States to a greater degree than any single State of the Union is economically dependent on the rest of the United States.

Necessity for economic independence

It has long been asserted that political independence without economic independence is an empty shell. The continuation of the so-called Free Trade policy, which transformed the Philippines into an economic dependency of the United States, is inconsistent with the realization of full independence by the Philippines. This crucial point has been stressed not only by the most consistent spokesmen of the Filipino independence movement but by American authorities as well. Francis B. Sayre, for six years Assistant Secretary of State charged with the negotiation of American trade agreements and American High Commissioner to the Philippines from 1939 until the Japanese occupation of the Islands, raised this question sharply in an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* of March 1945. Mr. Sayre pointed out, before the present legislation was enacted:¹³

If the Filipino people are ever to have the independence which they crave, clearly their fundamental economy and means of livelihood must be free from dependence upon changeable legislative majorities in the United States Congress. Political independence

without economic independence would be a mockery. Furthermore, if stable foundations are to be built for a lasting world peace, the postwar trade arrangements must be built upon the equality of commercial treatment to all and not upon special trade preferences and discriminations. If the United States grants and receives exclusive preferential treatment in areas with which it has close political ties, it would be difficult for us successfully to oppose Imperial and Dominion preferences in the British Empire and elsewhere . . .

Because the present economic dependence of the Filipinos upon the United States is largely of our own making and because it is to our own interest to build for future stability in the Pacific, the Filipino people must be given their independence under such conditions as will assure them sound economic foundations for their future.

Departure from Roosevelt policy

The Philippine Trade Act of 1946, however, is based on the principle of a prolonged period of free trade and perpetuates the economic dependence of the Philippines on the United States for many years to come. The adoption of this policy marks a departure by the Truman administration from the orientation of the Roosevelt administration against a prolonged period of free trade. Leroy D. Stinebower, Deputy Director of the Office of International Trade Policy of the State Department, reported in his statement to the House Ways and Means Committee:¹⁴

During the current year the problem of United States-Philippine trade relations has been re-examined in the light of changed conditions resulting from the war. At the request of the chairman of the Filipino Rehabilitation Commission a report on future trade relations between the two countries was prepared by the Executive Committee on Economic Foreign Policy, an interdepartmental committee created for the purpose of advising the President and the Secretary of State in the field of foreign economic policy. The committee in reviewing the whole problem sought a solution which would be consistent with Philippine independence, would be in line with the general commercial policies of the United States and at the same time would give full consideration to the tremendous problems faced by the Filipinos as a result of the war and full recognition of the close and friendly relations which have existed between the peoples of the two countries.

The Executive Committee on Economic Foreign Policy had previously—on March 16, 1945—gone on record against a pro-

longed period of free trade, and its position had been approved by President Roosevelt.

The Philippine Trade Act establishes exclusive preferential treatment for the United States in such extreme terms that the amendment of the Constitution of the Philippines is demanded, despite the fact that the present Constitution binds the future independent government to adjust and respect the property rights of the United States and its citizens and was approved by President Roosevelt.¹⁵ The amendment now demanded in the Act departs from policies already agreed on and has aroused the charge of impinging upon the sovereignty of the future independent Philippines by insisting on the same rights for American citizens and corporations in the Philippines which will be enjoyed by Filipino citizens and corporations. The Act establishes gradually declining free trade relations until July 3, 1974. During this period absolute quotas are imposed on Philippine sugar, cordage and other products. These quotas are to be allocated annually to the manufacturers in the Philippines in the calendar year 1940 or their successors in interest. This gives a protected position to the American interests already established as of this date and penalizes newcomers and Filipinos as well. The Act further promotes the artificial export economy of the Islands and militates against the modernization and diversification of agriculture and the industrial development of the Islands.

Filipino opposition to the Act was widespread and during the recent election campaign some Manila newspapers described the Philippine legislation in this session of Congress as an American variant of the "Japanese Co-Prosperity Sphere." President-elect Manuel Roxas maintained silence on this Act during the Philippine elections. Upon his recent arrival in the United States he has expressed the most fulsome praise of the future American-Philippine economic relations determined by the Act. Inviting American capital to invest in the Philippines, Roxas declared at a press conference in Washington:¹⁶

Indeed we are grateful for the wisdom and generosity you have shown in providing trade relations which are, as President Truman said, alien to the over-all international trade policy of the United States. You have provided preferential trade relations with the Philippines, although elsewhere in the world you are trying to break down the system of trade preference.

Opinion of Senator Tydings

During the hearings on the Act Senator Tydings, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs, asserted that opposition to Philippine independence was one of the important motivations of the proponents of the Act. He said:¹⁷

I have no right to quote the Governor (McNutt), but I think that fundamentally he is opposed to Philippine independence, and if you would ask him he would tell you so. The truth of the matter is that most of the people, outside the Filipinos, who favor this bill are fundamentally opposed to Philippine independence. Many of them have told me so. I do not like to mention names. Their whole philosophy is to keep the Philippines economically even though we lose them politically . . .

Will the Philippines be independent if they are forever hooked to our economy? If they get ingrained into our economic system we will hold the whip and they will not be independent, just as sure as you are born.

Senator Tydings, at the time, appeared to act on the assumption that he would have the support of the Administration for his own bill which provided for a quicker termination of free trade than the Bell Bill. The hearings reveal that President Truman at the time had apparently not as yet taken a firm stand on the question. Congressman Cooper declared that the chairman of the committee had received a letter from "the President of the United States, as we understood, in support of the Bell Bill."

Senator Tydings immediately interjected that he would like to see the letter "because I just came from the White House and there seems to be a mistake some place."¹⁸

Subsequently a compromise was effected at a conference in the President's office, according to evidence presented at the hearings, and Senator Tydings went along with the redrafted Trade Act, which is still based on a prolonged period of free trade.

It is not only with reference to legislation adopted that Mr. McNutt has aroused bitter criticism among Filipinos as a foe of Philippine independence. The practical policies of his office came into conflict with incumbent President Sergio Osmena. The Democratic Alliance which grew out of the anti-Japanese resistance movement and was the most articulate component of the coalition against President-elect Roxas, in the April 23rd elections,¹⁹ declared on March 5th, 1946:

The Democratic Alliance has analyzed the points of controversy between the [Osmena] Administration and the High Commissioner. Fundamentally, the issue between the two is that of colonial liberation as against imperialism . . .

Now the Administration is engaged in a controversy with the American High Commissioner over issues which are fundamental in that they affect the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country and ultimately its independence and security. Mr. McNutt wants the Japanese-held hemp plantations for the United States

Commercial Company. The President (Osmena) wants them for the Filipinos. Mr. McNutt wants the moratorium on prewar debts lifted. The President, in the interest of his people, does not want it lifted now. The Administration wants a sufficient allocation of imported sugar for distribution among a needy population. The Office of the High Commissioner wants the allocation of this imported sugar determined by the United States Commercial Company.

America's insistence on the free trade program is emphasized by the fact that even compensation for war damage, provided for in the Philippine Rehabilitation Act of 1946, is made conditional upon the acceptance of the Free Trade Relations Act by the Philippine Government.²⁰

Filipinos oppose Tydings Amendment

The Tydings Amendment to the Philippine Independence Act (S1967) now pending in the United States Congress has likewise aroused bitter opposition in the Islands. It provides that "there shall remain vested in the Government of the United States all the rights, title and interest of said Government or its agencies or instrumentalities, to all such real and personal property as may on the date of independence be vested in, or later be acquired by the Government of the United States for use in the performance of the functions of the Army, Navy" and numerous other American agencies. President Osmena expressed vigorous opposition to the Tydings Amendment, charging that this proposal is "a curtailment of Philippine sovereignty, a virtual nullification of Philippine independence."

This bill, which goes even beyond permanent American bases in the Philippines, appears to be another departure from the policy advanced by President Roosevelt. Manuel Quezon, the late President of the Philippines, reported in his autobiography, which has just been published in the United States, on a conference he had with President Roosevelt prior to the introduction of the Tydings-McDuffie Act. "President Roosevelt," Quezon related, "readily agreed that the maintenance of military reservations in the Philippines after the proclamation of the Philippine Republic would, in itself, make the granting of independence a farce."²¹

On July 4th America will officially withdraw its sovereignty from the Philippines. But the birth of the Philippine Republic has been surrounded with so many qualifications and amendments that it no longer proclaims the dawn of a new Asia. America today is pioneering with new forms which leave the old, prewar colonial content substantially unchanged.

Notes

- 1 Philippine Trade Act of 1946, Public Law 371—79th Congress (H.R. 5856), and Philippine Rehabilitation Act of 1946, Public Law 370—79th Congress (S. 1610), both approved on April 30, 1946.
- 2 W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928, Vol. II, pp. 566—567.
- 3 Public Law No. 240—64th Congress, approved on August 29, 1916.
- 4 Forbes, *op. cit.*, p. 547.
- 5 Forbes, *op. cit.*, p. 523. Report of the Special Mission on Investigation to the Philippine Islands, Oct. 8, 1921, signed by General Leonard Wood, chairman, and W. Cameron Forbes.
- 6 President Coolidge's Reply to a Philippine Independence Mission, Feb. 21, 1924, Forbes, *op. cit.*, pp. 549 and 551.
- 7 Forbes, *op. cit.*, p. 558.
- 8 Forbes, *op. cit.*, p. 563.
- 9 48 Stat., 456, also cited as the Independence Act.
- 10 "Some Statistics on the Philippines," compiled by Ona K. D. Ringwood, *Foreign Policy Reports*, Vol. XXI, No. 14, New York: Foreign Policy Association, October 1, 1945.
- 11 Hearings on Philippine Trade Act before the Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, 79th Congress, 1st Session, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1946, pp. 235—236.
- 12 Hearings, p. 199.
- 13 Hearings, pp. 299—300.
- 14 Hearings, p. 182.
- 15 The proponents of the British Imperial Preference system are already citing Truman's signing of the Philippine Trade Act as a defense of the Preference system. The *New York Post* of May 10, 1946 quotes the London *Daily Express* as follows: "When America on the one hand grants Preference to a people who have long been under her tutelage and on the other hand demands that the benefits of Preference should be eliminated among the British peoples, the negotiations become farcical."
- 16 *New York Times*, May 12, 1946.
- 17 Hearings, pp. 90 and 103.
- 18 Hearings, p. 190.
- 19 Seven of the nine congressional candidates of the Democratic Alliance from Central Luzon were elected to the Philippine House of Representatives. Lieutenants of President-elect Roxas, however, have already started a campaign and drafted a bill to unseat the victorious Democratic Alliance candidates.
- 20 Title VI, Sec. 601 of the Rehabilitation Act provides: "No payments under Title I of this Act in excess of \$500 shall be made until an executive agreement shall have been entered into between the President of the United States and the President of the Philippines, and such agreement shall have become effective according to its terms, providing for trade relations between the United States and the Philippines."
- 21 Manuel Luis Quezon, *The Good Fight*, New York: Appleton-Century, 1946, p. 151.

NOTE ON THE PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS

Abraham Chapman

Source: *Pacific Affairs* 19(2) (1946): 193-8.

To many foreign observers, the outstanding result of the Philippine national elections on April 23 is the paradoxical one that, in the only Far Eastern dependency where a significant anti-Japanese movement arose during the war, the President-elect, Vice-President-elect and majority membership in the Congress comprise men who were identified with the Japanese wartime puppet regime. The incumbent President, Sergio Osmeña, was defeated by Manuel A. Roxas, by an estimated plurality of 150,000 votes. Roxas' running-mate, Elpidio Quirino, was elected to the Vice-Presidency by a much smaller plurality.

The issue of collaborationism with Japan played a prominent role in the election campaign. President Osmeña, who as Vice-President succeeded President Manuel Quezon on the latter's death in the United States in August 1944, had spent all of the war years outside of the Philippines. Roxas, however, had remained in the Philippines during the entire occupation period and had occupied several important positions under the Japanese. According to the American consul, now retired, who was in Manila from March through September 1945:

"In the view of many liberal Filipinos and Americans, Manuel Roxas is a collaborationist and should, prior to participating in Philippine political life, stand trial for his activities as a holder of important offices in the Japanese-controlled puppet regime during the war years."¹

On his part, in his first overseas broadcast after his election to the Presidency, Roxas declared:

"These charges of collaboration have been completely and unequivocally repudiated by the Filipino people who were here and in the best position to know the significance of my actions. Had there been any semblance of truth to these charges, the Filipino people would have completely rejected us."²

The emergence of Roxas into political prominence occurred during a controversy between Quezon and Osmeña in 1921, as a result of which he was elected Speaker of the Lower House (now known as the National Assembly) as the candidate of Quezon, who was elected President of the Senate. Before Pearl Harbor he had been elected President of the Senate, and during the Japanese occupation he occupied several prominent positions in the government. In April 1944 Roxas, who had fled Manila before the advance of the Allied forces, was found at the summer-capital city of Baguio together with other members of the puppet "Republic" and was forthwith given his liberty by the American High Command, whereas the others were held on charges of collaboration with the enemy. Shortly thereafter he resumed his prewar position as majority leader and took office as President of the Senate.

The issues on which candidates Osmeña and Roxas stood opposed were, in the early stages of the campaign, not sharply drawn. Both men had for many years been leaders in the same political party, the Nacionalista. Before the war the late President Quezon and a group of Filipino and Spanish politicians and industrialists had controlled all of the domestic affairs of the Commonwealth. Since most of these leaders subsequently collaborated with the Japanese, Roxas in doing so typified the pattern of the Nacionalista. In the opinion of a Filipino commentator whose statements on the subject were, as far as the author is aware, publicly unchallenged:

"The situation existing in the Philippines is quite unique. Except for its two foremost statesmen [Quezon and Osmeña] who exiled themselves in Washington, almost all the known Filipino leaders cooperated with the Japanese . . . Of the 300 outstanding Nacionalistas, barely 30 in number refused to serve under the Japanese. From the humblest *barrio* [village] lieutenant to the highest hierarchy, the Party was one in cooperating with the invaders 'to protect the people'. "³

Since early in the present century, the Nacionalista Party has dominated the Philippine political scene. In prewar days, accordingly, presidential campaigns were fought primarily on the basis of personalities, not of platforms. Since there was no major opposition party, voters generally followed that candidate whose personality they regarded as being the most colorful or otherwise agreeable. The 1946 campaign brought something new into the

Philippine political arena: an opposition with a program distinctly opposed to that of the Nacionalista candidate.

Until January 1946 there was a chance that the campaign would follow traditional lines. President Osmeña sought to secure Roxas as his vice-presidential running-mate on a united Nacionalista ticket—known in Filipino political parlance as an *Os-rox* ticket. Roxas, however, was unwilling to accept anything less than complete leadership of the Nacionalista. Accordingly, some three months before the election date, Roxas broke away from Osmeña and created the so-called Liberal Party or Liberal wing of the Nacionalista Party. In fact, the Roxas or Liberal Party now contains a majority of the old-line Nacionalista politicians who controlled the Party in the days of President Quezon. It may therefore be concluded that the election of Roxas merely perpetuates the political hegemony of the old Nacionalista, though under a new label and under new conditions.

After Roxas broke away, Osmeña retained the name Nacionalista for his ticket, but, for reasons just noted, he was no longer the candidate of the Nacionalista Party as a whole. He became instead the titular standard-bearer of a coalition of parties and forces which were strongly opposed to Roxas, largely because of the latter's former collaborationist position. The most articulate and persistent component of this coalition was the Democratic Alliance.

Created in July 1945, the Democratic Alliance was a political expression of the Filipino anti-Japanese resistance movements which had grown up during the preceding years. Included in the Alliance are the *Hukbalahap*⁴ and other guerrilla groups; the National Peasants Union, a Luzon organization claiming more than 100,000 members; the Committee on Labor Organization, representing those branches of the labor movement in Manila now under the leadership of former guerrillas; the Civil Liberties Union; the Communist Party of the Philippines, which had united with the Socialist Party before the war; and numerous individuals in business, politics, the professions, etc.

From its inception, the Democratic Alliance adopted a strong stand against the continuance in government service of men who had served in the Japanese puppet regime. Declaring its adherence to "President Roosevelt's injunction that all who collaborated with the enemy shall at least be removed from positions of political or economic life,"⁵ the Alliance went on to urge complete independence, economic as well as political, for the Philippines; basic agrarian and industrial reforms; recognition of collective bargaining rights for labor; and immediate relief for war victims and the needy.

Until the break between Osmeña and Roxas, the Democratic Alliance had considered the possibility of putting forward an independent slate of its own, including candidates for the presidency and other offices. After the break, which placed Roxas and Osmeña on opposing slates, the Democratic Alliance announced its support of Osmeña, effecting a three-party coalition comprising the Osmeña Nacionalista, the Democratic Alliance, and the

Popular Front (a small prewar party opposed to the Nacionalista). For the Congress these three parties put forward coalition candidates for the Senate and their own independent candidates for the Assembly.

Because the emergence of a militant, well-organized opposition in Philippine politics is such a novel event, it may be of interest to examine some of the factors which underlie it. In the first place, the social and economic problems which characterized the prewar Commonwealth were aggravated by the dislocations and uncertainties of the war years. Members of the Filipino resistance movement are not likely to have fought and suffered as they did without gaining a new political awareness and sense of responsibility regarding the future of their nation. New leaders were born in the war years—leaders who are hopeful of witnessing the expropriation, in some measure, of the extensive lands held by the Church, the big corporations, and the big hacenderos. These new leaders, products of a people's resistance movement, want to have the entire Filipino people share in any future development, political or economic, of the Islands. They insist on real independence, real democracy.

It would, therefore, be a mistake to think that, in waging guerrilla warfare against the Japanese, the Filipino peasants and other popular elements gave no consideration to the political and economic problems which they knew would face the nation after liberation. The underground movement published several newspapers during the occupation. One of these, representing the left-wing resistance groups, had this to say on the problems of local government:

"Our war against the Japanese bandits has entered its decisive stage . . . But our struggle is not only for the purpose of driving the Japanese fascists out and smashing the puppet regime. We are fighting and must fight hard for the establishment of a people's democratic government, for the complete independence of our country . . . [The new local governments] to be established must be more democratic than the local governments under the Commonwealth . . . The new governments must guarantee broader freedom of suffrage and other rights for all citizens, irrespective of classes, sex, religious or party affiliations, and irrespective of whether they know how to read or write. Traitors, puppets, enemy spies and collaborators must be totally disfranchised."⁶

It is, therefore, not surprising that the anti-Roxas coalition, led by the Democratic Alliance, has been unequivocally opposed to the Philippines Trade Act, or Bell Bill, which was adopted by the United States Congress on the eve of the Philippine elections and signed by President Truman on April 30. The opposition charges that this Act is a negation of America's promise of independence on July 4, 1946, because it perpetuates Philippine economic

dependence on the United States after the granting of political "independence" in July.⁷

The Tydings Amendment to the Philippines Independence Act (S. 1967), now pending in the United States Senate, has aroused bitter opposition in the Islands. It provides that "there shall remain vested in the Government of the United States all the rights, title, and interest of said Government or its agencies or instrumentalities, to all such real and personal property as may on the date of independence be vested in, or later be acquired by, the Government of the United States for use in the performance of the functions of the Army, Navy" and numerous other American agencies. As standard-bearer of the coalition, Osmeña expressed vigorous opposition to the Tydings Amendment, charging that it is "a curtailment of Philippine sovereignty, a virtual nullification of Philippine independence."

Roxas, on the other hand, completed his campaign without taking a stand regarding these bills, though their introduction in the United States Congress had evoked widespread public discussion throughout the Islands.

While the so-called Liberal Party of Roxas has secured a clear majority in Congress, it will not be able to legislate without a determined opposition. Osmeñista candidates won in Cebu, the home province of the incumbent President. From Central Luzon, seven of the nine Democratic Alliance candidates were elected to the Assembly. Democratic Alliance candidates Luis Taruc, Commander-in-Chief of the Hukbalahap, and Amada Yuson, a leader of the National Peasants Union, were elected to the Assembly from Pampanga, receiving an estimated 85 per cent of the total vote in the province. In Bulacan province, which returned a slight majority for Roxas, two Democratic Alliance candidates received 75 per cent of the vote. The other Democratic Alliance member comes from the southern district of Tarlac. In Manila the two Democratic Alliance candidates were defeated. In all, 65 Roxas candidates and 36 Osmeñistas were elected to the Assembly.

New members of the Senate comprise nine followers of Roxas and seven Osmeñistas. Including the eight Senators who remain in office from the previous session (but excluding three members under indictment for collaboration with the Japanese and hence of uncertain status), the present Senate contains 12 Roxas followers and nine Osmeñistas. At the first session of the new Senate, the Roxas majority refused to seat three minority members—an act which the minority leader and former guerrilla leader Tomas Confesor described as a violation of the Constitution.

The victorious Roxas congressmen are reported to have begun a movement to unseat the opposition members elected by the Democratic Alliance. Prospero Sanidad, Speaker pro-tem of the Assembly, declared that such elected officials "have no place in our scheme of government."⁸ Jose Nueno, a Liberal Party congressman, was said to have drafted legislation intended to unseat the seven Democratic Alliance members of the Assembly.⁹

In assessing the significance of the election returns, it may be helpful to note that of the total population of 17 million, less than three millions were eligible to vote, and only an estimated 2,100,000 actually did vote.¹⁰ Roxas was elected by the smallest plurality ever received by a candidate for a major post in a Philippine election. On the basis of his past performance and his political associations, the administration of Roxas may be expected to befriend American business interests, which already hold a commanding position in the economic life of the Islands. It is also to be expected that, although the Osmeña wing of the Nacionalista may in large part re-unite with Roxas after his victory at the polls, fundamental differences will exist between the new President and the newly-formed opposition.

Notes

- 1 Monroe Hall, "Collaborators' Candidate," *Far Eastern Survey*, March 13, 1946, p. 72.
The Solicitor General of the People's Court in Manila was reported to have said on March 14, 1946, that "No criminal action for treason can be filed against" Roxas. He added: "Treason should be distinguished from collaboration. One can be a collaborator and still not be a traitor." *Philippine Liberty News*, Manila, March 15, 1946.
Yet a few days earlier, the Philippine People's Court in reaching its first decision in the criminal trials of collaborationists, had ruled that: "The act of accepting and holding any policy-making or directing positions in any of the puppet governments, and discharging the duties and functions of these positions is treasonable in itself." (*Editor's note.*)
- 2 *New York Herald Tribune*, April 29, 1946.
- 3 Pedro Batungbakal, *Collaboration in the Philippines*, Manila, 1945.
- 4 The Hukbalahap—a contraction of the Tagalog *Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon* or People's Anti-Japanese Army—was influenced by the organizational experience, as well as tracts on the nature and spirit of guerrilla tactical warfare, of the Chinese Communist New Fourth and Eighth Route armies. Two squadrons of the Hukbalahap, known as the *Wha-Chi*, were composed of Chinese residing in the Philippines.
- 5 *Program of the Democratic Alliance*, Manila, July 15, 1945.
On the other hand, on May 9, 1946—some two weeks after the Philippine elections—General Douglas MacArthur was reported by the Associated Press to have said, in Tokyo, that Roxas is "a staunch patriot and most fitting representative of his people." MacArthur said that Roxas had been his agent in the Philippines during the Japanese occupation, and "not only was instrumental in providing . . . vital intelligence of the enemy but was one of the prime factors in the guerrilla movement." *New York Herald Tribune*, May 10, 1946. (*Editor's note.*)
- 6 *Katubusan Ng Bayan* ("Emancipation of the People"), in Tagalog and English, Central Luzon, November 16, 1944.
- 7 Trade legislation incorporated in the Bell Bill (H.R. 5856) has these objectives: "establishment of customs duties on a reciprocal basis, preferential as against all other countries; determination of quotas on the imports [into the United States] of major Philippine products; reciprocal, non-discriminatory treatment in the field of taxes; adjustments in the immigration laws of both countries to meet future needs; protection of United States citizens and American business enterprises

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against discriminatory treatment. Until July 3, 1954, all Philippine articles are permitted duty-free entry into [the United States] on an annual quota basis. After that, they will be subject, with certain exceptions, to graduated duties." *New York Herald Tribune*, May 1, 1946. The Bell Bill requires that the Constitution of the Philippines (which had already been approved by President Roosevelt) be amended, since the Bill grants to United States citizens and capital the same rights in the Philippines as those enjoyed by Filipino citizens and capital, without granting reciprocal rights within the United States to Filipino citizens and capital.

8 *Manila Post*, Manila, April 27, 1946.

9 *Ibid.*

10 In an editorial commenting on the elections, the *New York Times* construed the results as follows: "Mr. Roxas represented the prewar life [the Filipino people] knew. President Osmeña, as head of a coalition that included most of the leftist parties, proposed reforms that in their war-weariness, the Filipinos apparently were not prepared, as yet, to undertake." April 21, 1946.

PHILIPPINES

Shirley Jenkins

Source: Lawrence K. Rosinger et al., *The State of Asia: A Contemporary Survey*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf (1951), pp. 362-84.

The Philippine Islands are of particular interest today for three main reasons: their strategic location, their historic nationalist movement, and their experience as a testing ground of United States colonial policy. As part of the South East Asian region, the Philippines lies on the outer rim of American military strength and influence in the Far East. This was indicated in President Truman's decision, announced on June 27, 1950, to strengthen United States forces in the Islands and to accelerate military aid to the Philippine government, at the same time that American forces were directed to Korea and the Seventh Fleet was sent to Formosan waters.

Nationalism, which has been so powerful a force in Asia since World War II, has long been a factor in Philippine political history. The struggle against Spanish rule at the end of the last century was later turned against the establishment of American sovereignty. During almost half a century as a United States colony, the Filipinos never abandoned their efforts to win independence. The achievement of sovereignty on July 4, 1946, although a necessary prerequisite to political and economic development, was not the hoped-for panacea. Long-standing social and economic problems were yet to be solved. As elsewhere in Asia, discontent with agrarian conditions was spreading, the standard of living was not improving, and hopes for rapid reform were being dissipated. One of the products of the Pacific War in the Philippines was the Hukbalahap, a guerrilla group with a recognized anti-Japanese record. This peasant force, operating under Communist leadership with captured American and Japanese arms, did not disband after the war but continued active resistance against the administration. Renamed the Philippine People's Liberation Army, its followers now seek not only rural reform but the eventual overthrow of the government.

United States influence has had particular significance in the affairs of this troubled country. The economic policy that the United States developed



towards the Philippines during almost half a century of American sovereignty reflected the mixed motives of various United States business and farm groups. Some of these groups desired to extend American trade and investments in Asia, while others were disturbed at what they regarded as a Philippine threat to United States products. The Philippine Trade Act of 1946, which outlined post-independence relations with the United States, sought to compromise among these elements by providing for economic and fiscal ties between the Islands and the United States, along with absolute quota restrictions on certain Philippine exports to this country. In spite of the valuable suggestions of the Joint Philippine-American Finance Commission in 1947, and the large postwar American rehabilitation payments in the Islands, the Philippines could not easily recover from the destruction of the war years and overcome the limitations of its colonial economy, the restrictions of the Trade Act, and the inadequacies of its own administration. As a result, real stability was not achieved, and at the present time the Philippines faces an acute financial and economic crisis.

The United States is deeply committed in Philippine affairs, and seeks an approach towards the Republic which will make an effective contribution to American Far Eastern policy. To this end the recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission to the Philippines, headed by Daniel W. Bell, advocated in October 1950 far-reaching reforms in Philippine industry, agriculture, and social legislation, along with supervised American aid. The job to be done, however, is by no means a simple one, for no economy can be easily reshaped from the outside. In addition to the more obvious economic difficulties, there are political realities to be faced as well. There is a real question as to how far supervised aid can be extended without raising problems in connection with Philippine sovereignty.

Manuel Quezon, first Philippine president, has been widely quoted as saying he would prefer a government run like hell by the Filipinos to one run like heaven by the Americans. But these are poor alternatives, as the Filipinos have discovered, both before and after independence. While it is unlikely that a foreign-run government could ever appear to be a heaven to its subjects, it is also questionable whether a domestic-run inferno could long satisfy the people. With reference to American policy the late Joseph Ralston Hayden, former vice-governor-general of the Islands, said:

Mankind instinctively feels that any group of seventeen million human beings with common and unique characteristics, inhabiting a definite portion of the earth's surface and united under a single government possesses a *prima facie* right to be treated as a nation.¹

For the most part, however, it has been foreign wars, military conquests, and trade agreements, as well as the Filipino determination "to be treated as

a nation," which have shaped the history of the Philippines and charted its course of development.

The Philippine archipelago consists of over seven thousand islands lying off the southeast coast of Asia, with a total land area of 115,600 square miles. In spite of the large number of islands, both cultivated land area and population are concentrated. The two largest islands are Luzon in the north and Mindanao in the south, with areas of 40,420 square miles and 36,537 square miles respectively. Other important islands include Bohol, Cebu, Leyte, Masbate, Mindoro, Negros, Palawan, Panay, and Samar. These eleven islands contain approximately ninety-four per cent of the total Filipino population, estimated at 19,518,000 in 1950. The principal cities of the Philippines are: Manila, with a population of 1,024,557 in 1948, Cebu, Zamboanga, Davao, and Iloilo. The majority of Filipinos, however, live and work in rural areas and are dependent on a highly specialized agricultural economy.

This island insularity may have contributed to the homogeneity of the Filipino people, who are of Malay origin. In spite of numerous ethnic groups, the population as a whole has a unified character. Inter-marriage, however, has resulted in a wide diffusion of Chinese and Spanish characteristics. More than nineteen-ths of the population is Christian, including about seventy-eight per cent who are Roman Catholics and ten per cent who are affiliated with the Aglipayan Church, an independent denomination. There is also a Moslem or Moro minority, and in the cities there are important foreign communities made up of Spanish, Chinese, and Americans.

The Philippines is rich in natural resources and, under improved conditions of cultivation, could adequately support about three times the present population. Before the war, however, only one fourth of the arable land was in production. At that time the major export crops of the Philippines were sugar, copra, abaca, and tobacco, while rice, corn, and sweet potatoes were produced for domestic consumption. Another important group of prewar exports included valuable minerals such as gold, manganese, and chrome. This emphasis on agriculture and mining was characteristic of the colonial economy of the Philippines, geared as it was to the American market. The potentialities for improved agricultural as well as industrial development are present, however, and await the time when adequate planning and political stability will allow for their full realization.

The Filipinos have faced many setbacks in their struggle for recognition as a nation. For over three centuries Spain ruled the Islands, shaping them to the prototype of Latin American colonial areas, rather than to that of other countries in South East Asia, where a pattern of non-Christian religious practices, small landholdings, and strong family and village controls was dominant. The major Spanish heritage was the landholding system, a result of the allocation by the Spanish king of large tracts of Philippine land to favored individuals. The pattern then established has been preserved to the present day, with large landholdings and a high proportion of rural tenancy.

The crop yield is divided between tenant and landlord, the tenant frequently receiving only thirty to fifty per cent in spite of recent legislation fixing his share at seventy per cent. Thus the Filipino peasant lacks the means for bare subsistence, and rural debt is a constant problem. The Spanish influence also resulted in the establishment of a very influential Catholic Church, in the centralized governmental administration, in the use of the Spanish language by many political and educational leaders, and in substantial Spanish interests in trade, industry, and agriculture. These factors remain, even though the American conquest of the Philippines brought Spanish control to an end and altered the direction of Philippine development along lines more suitable to American interests.

The history of the Filipino people, however, cannot be explained solely in terms of the policies of the interested foreign governments. Nationalism has been a potent force in Philippine history and has had an important effect on the evolution of both Spanish and United States policy. Philippine opposition to Spanish rule reached its height in the last decade of the nineteenth century, with demands for land reform and independence. Revolution broke out in August 1896, but was not successful, and many Filipino leaders were shot or went into exile.

During the Spanish-American war in 1898, the United States fought Spain in the Philippines and helped some Filipino leaders to return to their homeland. Filipino revolutionaries set up a constitutional republic at Malolos in June 1898, with Aguinaldo as president. It was the claim of Aguinaldo that Admiral Dewey, before the defeat of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, had promised Philippine sovereignty in return for Filipino co-operation against Spain, but the Admiral denied this. When Spain was finally defeated the Filipinos did not achieve the independence they sought. Instead they found United States control substituted for Spanish rule.

The Filipinos unsuccessfully opposed the American occupation. Despite their protests, Washington decided to annex the Islands, and under Article III of the Treaty of Paris Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States. The Treaty also included a provision whereby the United States agreed to pay twenty million dollars to Spain, and to allow Spanish ships and goods to enter the Islands for a ten-year period, on a basis of equality with American ships and goods. In spite of revolution and sacrifice, the Philippines remained a colony.

There was a mixed reception in America to the acquisition of the Philippines. Some individuals and groups favored the expansionist policy, but others, including Mark Twain, practically labeled it "un-American." In commenting on the Philippine campaign Twain wrote:

What we wanted in the interest of Progress and Civilization was the Archipelago, unencumbered by patriots struggling for independence; and War was what we needed . . .

With our Treaty ratified, Manila subdued . . . we had no further use for Aguinaldo and the owners of the Archipelago. We forced a war and we have been hunting America's guest and ally through the woods and swamps ever since.

Twain suggested that there had been an alternative that he considered more in line with American principles:

Dewey could have gone about his affairs elsewhere and left the competent Filipino army to starve out the little Spanish garrison and send it home, and the Filipino citizens to set up the form of government they might prefer and deal with the friars and their doubtful acquisitions according to Filipino ideas of fairness and justice—ideas which have since been tested and found to be of as high an order as any that prevail in Europe or America.²

But Philippine affairs were to become American affairs, as the predominant concept of the role of the United States in the Pacific began to change. President McKinley expressed the official point of view when, in commenting on the Philippine campaign, he said that the United States had taken up arms against Spain in "the fulfillment of high public and moral obligations." But he added: "Incidental to our tenure in the Philippines is the commercial opportunity to which American statesmanship cannot be indifferent."³

Following an initial period of military occupation, the Philippines was administered by a United States civil governor-general, but remained under the authority of the War Department. Improvements were initiated in sanitation and education, particularly in the cities, and a Legislative Assembly was established in 1907. In the Jones Act, passed in 1916 during the Wilson administration, the Philippines were promised ultimate independence. The Act declared that the United States intended to withdraw its sovereignty from the Islands when a stable government had been established. This statement, which was in keeping with the position of the Democratic party, was accompanied by an accelerated policy of "Filipinization" of the administration in the Islands. As a result, many civil service and governmental posts were turned over to Filipinos, and local and provincial autonomy progressed. At the same time, however, sweeping veto powers were still held by the American governor-general.

The policy of supporting self-rule was not solely a product of advanced thinking and paternalism in Washington. It also reflected the activity of the Philippine independence movement. Since the establishment of the Legislative Assembly in 1907, the Nacionalista party in the Philippines had campaigned actively for Philippine sovereignty. This single issue overshadowed other matters that might have caused domestic dissension and allowed opposition parties to develop; for regardless of differences in

outlook or position, few Filipinos were willing to forego the demand for independence.

Many Filipinos understood the consequences of a prolonged colonial status on their future livelihood. For example, in February 1930, at an Independence Congress attended by some two thousand Filipinos, including professional, educational, labor, government, religious and student leaders, the delegates resolved:

The uncertainty of our future political status hampers the economic development of the country. Our present trade relations with the United States are not conducive to the economic independence of the Philippines, and whatever may be the temporary advantages of such relations, we are willing to forego them for the sake of freedom . . . The longer we remain under America, the harder will it be for us to be freed from our political and economic dependence on her . . .

. . . the genius and potentialities of the Filipino people can only be developed in an atmosphere of freedom unrestrained by foreign rule.⁴

The particular issue that most troubled Filipino patriots at the time was the growing economic dependence on the United States. Because of its status as an American colony Philippine products entered the United States free of duty, and manufactured goods from America found their way to Philippine markets, without tariff charges. Philippine trade activity concentrated on the American market and, as a result production became increasingly specialized in certain agricultural crops. Over the years from 1880 to 1908 the United States had accounted for an annual average of about twenty-three per cent of Philippine foreign trade; for the period from 1936 to 1940 the annual average was seventy-three per cent. Philippine exports included such items as sugar, abaca, copra, and tobacco, with a small amount of consumer goods such as pearl buttons. Mineral products, particularly gold, were also important. Total trade grew steadily, stimulated by the large American market, and merchandising and marketing facilities in the Islands expanded. Transportation was extended; health, sanitation, and educational institutions were developed; cities were modernized; and a new group of wealthy Filipino businessmen arose as a result of the growth of foreign trade. But for Filipinos dependent on agriculture (over seventy per cent of the population) there was little improvement in conditions. In fact, tenancy grew: while at the beginning of the century about eighty per cent of Philippine farms were operated by owners, the figure had dropped to forty-nine per cent by 1939.

The extent to which Philippine affairs were shaped by outside factors can be seen in the events leading to the establishment of the sovereign Republic. American motives in the debate on Philippine independence in the early

thirties were mixed. Strong anticolonial as well as isolationist feelings had been expressed in the United States from the very beginning of the Philippine conquest. But the greatest pressure for severing the tie with the Islands came from American farm groups (including dairy producers and firms with interests in Cuban and Puerto Rican sugar), which felt that protection of American products through quotas and tariffs on Philippine exports would support prices in this country. The depression in the United States resulted in widespread unemployment, and American labor organizations, in addition to holding no brief for territorial expansion, also desired to protect their members from the competition they feared would be caused by the further unrestricted entry of low-cost "foreign labor."

The Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act, passed by Congress in January 1933, provided for Philippine independence, but it had a stormy political reception that led to its disavowal by both American and Filipino leaders. In the United States the measure was vetoed by President Hoover and repassed by Congress over the veto. In the Philippines Manuel Quezon raised strong objections to the Act, particularly to the provision for retention of American military and naval bases in the islands. The Act became a cause of political dissension, with Quezon on one side and Manuel Roxas and Sergio Osmena, who had worked for passage of the legislation, on the other. The Philippine legislature, however, supported Quezon, and the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act was rejected. Subsequently Quezon headed a mission to the United States, where he encouraged passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, known as the Philippine Independence Act of 1934. This measure closely resembled the earlier legislation, except that the new Act provided for withdrawal of American military establishments after sovereignty had been achieved. It was accepted by Quezon partly because it appeared to be the best bargain that could be driven and partly because of the promise implicit in the message of the newly inaugurated President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to Congress on March 2, 1934. Roosevelt said of the Tydings-McDuffie Act:

Where imperfections or inequalities exist, I am confident that they can be corrected after proper hearing and in fairness to both peoples.⁵

The Tydings-McDuffie Act defined the economic relations between the United States and the Philippine Islands for the duration of American sovereignty, and also prescribed certain interim steps on the way to full independence for the Philippines. Free trade was to continue during 1935-40, but the quantities of products which were duty-free were restricted. Philippine exports to the United States in excess of 850,000 long tons of sugar, 200,000 tons of coconut oil, and three million pounds of cordage annually were to be subject to full duties. United States products entering the Philippines, on the other hand, were all to be duty-free. During 1941-6 Philippine products

under preferential treatment were to be subject to an export tax starting at five per cent and increasing by five per cent annually until a level of twenty-five per cent was reached in 1946. After independence, which was to be achieved on July 4, 1946, full United States tariffs were to be paid. In the meantime tariff revenues before independence could be used to liquidate the bonded indebtedness of the Commonwealth.

These quota arrangements were later altered in other legislation. The major revision was the substitution of annually declining duty-free quotas in place of annually rising Philippine export taxes for coconut oil, cigars, pearl buttons, and certain tobacco products for the 1941-6 period. However, the main content of the Independence Act remained unchanged.

To most Filipinos the political provisions of the legislation were of more immediate concern than the long-range economic arrangements. The Act inaugurated a "Commonwealth" period for the Islands' government, and provided for the election of Filipino delegates to a Constitutional Convention that would draft a basic law for the future Republic. The resulting constitution, which was closely modeled on that of the United States, was approved by President Roosevelt and ratified by the Philippine electorate in 1935. This began the direct political transition from colony to sovereign state.

Originally the Philippine constitution established a unicameral legislature and six-year terms for both president and vice-president. In 1940, however, it was amended to provide for a bicameral legislature and four-year terms for the chief executives. The division of power and the legislative set-up of the Philippine government resembles that of the United States, except that there is a centralized rather than a federal form of government.

The President holds executive power, including various veto powers, control of the budget, and supervision over local government. Legislative authority is vested in a Congress, chosen by popular vote. The Congress consists of a Senate of twenty-four members elected at large for six-year terms and a House of Representatives composed of not more than 120 members, elected according to districts in the provinces. Judicial power is held by the supreme court and by lower courts. Included in the constitution is a Bill of Rights, providing for freedom of religion, speech, press, and other rights. At the time of adoption of the constitution, suffrage was exercised by literate male citizens of the Philippines who were twenty-one years of age or over. A plebiscite was to be held among the women to determine their interest in voting, and the women of the Philippines enfranchised themselves by an overwhelming majority. Voting, for both men and women, is limited to nationals who can read and write. This provision severely restricts the franchise, since only about half the adult population is literate.

By the mid-1930's the Commonwealth of the Philippines had inaugurated its constitution and established its governmental apparatus. From the time of the first Philippine Assembly in 1907 decisions on domestic affairs under

Filipino control were dominated by the Nacionalista party (*Partido Nacionalista*), whose influence also extended to all provincial and municipal bodies. Issues raised in the discussion of the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act in 1933 had split the party into the *Pros*, led by Osmena and Roxas, and the *Antis*, the dominant group under Quezon. But the opponents were soon reconciled, and in 1937 a coalition meeting resulted in a fusion of the two wings. Once again the Philippines had one-party Nacionalista rule.

Quezon's influence was felt in every area of Philippine politics, and was exerted not only through the organs of the central government and the local officials, but also through the strongly entrenched party apparatus and the party's caucus sessions. In the elections of 1938 Nacionalistas won in every one of the ninety-eight Assembly constituencies; and only five of the successful Nacionalista candidates ran in opposition to official party nominees. By 1940 minority groups had made some headway, one of the major gains being in Pampanga (Central Luzon), where the Socialist party, led by Pedro Abad Santos, elected mayors in eight of the twenty-one towns of the province. In November 1941 the power of the Nacionalista party was again shown with the re-election of Quezon as president, Osmena as vice-president, and an all-Nacionalista senate of twenty-four members, with ninety-five out of ninety-eight seats in the lower house going to Nacionalistas. Of the three million registered voters in the Philippines, however, only 1,700,000 went to the polls.

A good part of the strength of the Nacionalista party had come from its emphasis on Philippine independence, and the inauguration of the Commonwealth government in 1935 was regarded as a halfway mark on the road to sovereignty. But Filipino leaders, particularly President Quezon, were also aware of the need to develop the economy of the Philippines as a sound foundation for future independence. This was not an easy task, since the Philippines was predominantly an agricultural country producing raw materials for the American market. In 1939 agricultural products accounted for about four fifths of total Philippine exports, but it seemed inevitable that when the free trade advantage diminished under the Independence Act, the American market for Philippine exports would shrink. On the other hand, the Philippine dependence on imported manufactured goods would decrease only if the country became more self-sufficient and added to its industrial capacity. Industrial production accounted only for about 14.5 per cent of Philippine national income in 1939, and the existing modern plant was confined mainly to the processing of raw materials or to other operations related to the major export commodities.

Although a good part of the industry of the Philippines was foreign-controlled, total foreign investments in the islands did not reach a very high figure. The United States Tariff Commission estimated that American investments in 1935 were about two hundred million dollars, of which thirty-six million was in bonds, including securities of political and religious entities, and the rest in direct industrial investment. Prewar American

investments represented approximately sixty per cent of total foreign investment in the Islands. Different fields of operation attracted the nationals of different countries: gold, iron ore, chromite production and public utilities were controlled largely by American capital; sugar production and processing involved significant American and Spanish investments; coconut production had absorbed American and British capital. The tobacco industry was dominated by Spanish capital, and Spanish and American firms invested in cordage. About half of the Japanese capital was in abaca. Chinese capital was invested in timber, and in lumber production, and the growing Chinese community was of particular importance in retail trade. Chinese held about thirty-seven per cent of the capital invested in retail stores before the war, and the enterprises in which they had interests took in over half the total retail gross receipts. This situation led to sharp competition between Filipino and Chinese tradesmen, and stimulated Philippine attempts to control strictly the immigration of Chinese and even to limit alien participation in retail trade.

Before the war, in preparation for the time when trade preferences would cease, Filipinos sought to increase and diversify production. They found, however, that much of the foreign capital was tied to the old export industries and was not ready to venture into new industrial projects. A need developed for government initiative and enterprise, to begin the construction of an industrial economy. The foundation for such a policy had been laid during the Wilson administration, when the government of the Islands had become involved in banking, rail, and other enterprises. This activity was given legislative sanction in the Philippine constitution, which stated in Article XII, Section 6:

The State may, in the interest of national welfare and defense, establish and operate industries and means of transportation and communication, and, upon payment of just compensation, transfer to public ownership utilities and other private enterprises to be operated by the Government.⁶

An attempt was made to implement this provision through the activities of the Philippine National Development Company, a public corporation set up as an agency of the government. Over the years subsidiaries were also established, including the National Food Products Corporation, the National Rice and Corn Corporation, the National Warehousing Corporation, the National Footwear Corporation, the Cebu Portland Cement Company, the Insular Sugar Refining Company, and the Rural Progress Administration. The National Development Company also engaged in textile manufacturing and experimental farming. Other government agencies have included the National Abaca and Other Fibers Corporation, set up to aid in stabilizing prices; the National Coconut Corporation, for research and price stabiliza-

tion; the National Tobacco Corporation; the National Power Corporation; the Manila Railroad; the National Land Settlement Administration; and the National Cooperatives Administration. Real industrial development, however, had not gone much beyond the blueprint stage before the war in the Pacific brought all plans to an abrupt halt in 1941.

Industrial development could only be realized if living standards were also raised so that an internal market would be developed. To this end President Quezon had promulgated a "Social Justice" program, patterned on the "New Deal" in the United States and on the social reform program of the Mexican government under President Cardenas. The "Social Justice" program was part of the long-range attempt to develop the economy; but it placed special emphasis on the condition of rural and urban workers, and on social and labor legislation. The Quezon regime secured the passage of a Collective Bargaining Law and an Eight Hour Labor Law, and established a National Social Security Administration, a Court of Industrial Relations, an Agricultural and Industrial Bank, and a National Resettlement Project Administration.

In spite of these new agencies there was little real improvement in wages or living conditions. In 1939 the average daily wage of the Filipino industrial worker was forty-five cents. A survey the following year estimated that the average farm worker was paid about twenty-five cents a day. The low wages were particularly apparent in the salaries of women, who in 1939 comprised twenty-one per cent of the gainfully employed population. Forty-three per cent of the women were engaged in the lowest-paid occupation—agriculture—and women in industry were paid at lower rates than men. Average wages for women in the cigar, pottery, and candy factories and in rice mills were as low as four to seven dollars a month.

Where individual wages were so low, it was necessary for as many members of a family as possible to work. The incidence of child labor was high, and was in turn reflected in figures for school registration. In 1938, for example, eighty per cent of pupils in the public schools were in the first four grades. It was reported that, on the average, over fifty per cent of the children entering school left before completing the fourth grade.

Thus the Philippines before the war had to cope with many problems. Economically the country was seeking to emerge from its colonial status and to shift its economy from being primarily a producer of raw materials and an importer of consumer goods. Politically the dominant party in the Philippines had made an effective stand for political sovereignty, but widespread illiteracy, low standards of living, an underdeveloped economy, and political "bossism" had all retarded the growth of a truly representative system at home. Socially the country could not ignore the major domestic problems of housing, schools, sanitation, wages, and general living conditions. With these major issues few people suspected that the next four years would be spent mainly on quite a different problem—the fight against Japan.

On December 8, 1941, only a few hours after the attack at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese hit hard at the Philippines. The Islands could not be held against the overwhelming air, sea, and land attack, but the defense of the Bataan Peninsula and the fortress of Corregidor served to delay enemy action elsewhere in the Pacific. For political reasons it was decided that the top leaders of the Philippine government should leave the battle areas, and President Quezon, Vice-President Osmena, and others of the official family were taken to the United States. Here they organized a government-in-exile with headquarters in Washington, which served during the war as a reminder of Philippine resistance and as a legal representative of the Commonwealth in international affairs. The Philippines was among the founding members of the United Nations and was also represented in the Pacific War Council and in other wartime international bodies.

Under Japanese occupation most Filipinos suffered harsh restrictions on their way of life and standards of living, as well as rigid political regimentation. A sizeable number of Filipinos joined resistance forces that sabotaged Japanese activities and installations and often engaged Japanese armed forces, particularly in the rural areas. A few Filipinos, mainly from among those in official positions, were able to live comfortably under the occupation by collaborating with the Japanese. Among the well-known figures who held high posts in the puppet regime were Jose Laurel, its president, and Manuel Roxas, who was later vouched for by General Douglas MacArthur, and was elected president of the Republic. The question of collaboration was to become an important issue in postwar Philippine politics.

Another wartime development that has had serious postwar implications was the organization of an armed resistance group, the Hukbalahap (People's Army against the Japanese). This anti-Japanese movement, with headquarters in central Luzon, was based on a coalition of several prewar left-wing groups, including the United Front of Socialists and Communists, labor organizations, and the Civil Liberties Union. While its immediate goal was the defeat of Japan, it also initiated agrarian reforms and set up self-governing units in the areas under its control. Among the leaders were Pedro Abad Santos, head of the prewar Socialist party, Dr. Vicente Lava, scientist, and labor leader Luis Taruc, who later declared himself to be a Communist. The core of the Huk movement was a well organized guerrilla army, supplemented with large peasant reserves. The Huks were commended by American officers early in the liberation as an excellent fighting force, but their bitter anticollaborationist stand, their militant demands for social and agrarian reform, and their refusal to disarm after the war caused them to be regarded as "Reds," "bandits," and "outlaws" by both United States Army officials and Philippine government administrators.

The widely quoted prophecy of General MacArthur, "I shall return," was fulfilled in October 1944, when American forces landed at Leyte. Accompanying them was Sergio Osmena, who had succeeded to the presi-

gency of the Philippines upon the death of Manuel Quezon in August 1944 in the United States. The Philippine government received full authority for civil administration in February 1945. Many important decisions on policy matters, however, were still within the province of the United States Army forces in the area.

As soon as the Japanese had been ejected from the Philippines, the problems of liberation quickly gave way to those of relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. The Philippines had suffered greatly from the war; in fact a United States Congressional investigation called the country one of the most utterly devastated of all the war-ravaged areas of the world. This destruction had taken place in three phases: the initial fighting; the occupation period, marked by neglect and sabotage; and the bitter battle to eject the Japanese. After investigating the situation in June 1945, the United States War Damage Corporation, set up under the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, estimated the total loss to private, public, and Church properties at approximately eight hundred million dollars, and declared that the city of Manila had been about fifty per cent destroyed. But property damage was not the only or the most important cost of the war; the hard years of occupation and the wholesale destruction had taken a heavy toll in lives, health, morale, and facilities even for subsistence living. The Philippine government tried to cope with these needs on a day-to-day basis. But the major decisions on future plans awaited American legislation clarifying the extent of postwar aid and the nature of the economic relations between the United States and the Philippines.

The Philippine Rehabilitation Act, introduced in the United States Congress in 1945 and finally approved on April 30, 1946, provided for the establishment of a Philippine War Damage Commission of three members (including one Filipino) appointed by the President of the United States. The Commission was authorized to grant compensation for losses incurred in the Philippines as a result of enemy attack, guerrilla activity undertaken at the request of the United States, American actions in opposing the enemy, and disorder accompanying the collapse of civil authority, between December 7, 1941 and October 1, 1947.

There was much Congressional debate concerning the total amount that should be authorized for Philippine war damage payments. The sum of four hundred million dollars was finally allocated for private claims, to cover full payment of claims up to five hundred dollars and a percentage payment on larger claims. In addition, \$120,000,000 was authorized for various Philippine government agencies, to restore and improve public property and essential services, and five million dollars for the restoration of United States government property in the islands. To aid the Philippines in reconstruction, United States surplus property ranging up to one hundred million dollars (procurement value) was to be transferred to the Commonwealth government without compensation.

The rehabilitation measure was on the whole a *liberal proposal* to compensate individuals and corporations for war damage. One limitation, however, was a clause (Section 601) which stated that no payments over five hundred dollars would be made until the conclusion between the president of the United States and the president of the Philippines of an executive agreement, which would depend on Philippine acceptance of American legislation concerning future trade relations between the two countries. To obtain rehabilitation payments, including those to its own government, the Philippines were thus required to accept the controversial Philippine Trade Act, which was debated in Congress concurrently with the rehabilitation measure. The linking of rehabilitation with trade seemed to give the Filipinos little choice but to agree to certain onerous terms of the Trade Act in order to obtain American help.

The Philippine Trade Act, originally introduced into Congress in October 1945 by Congressman Bell, went through five versions and seven months of discussion and debate. The legislation that was finally approved on April 30, 1946 was very different from the original Bell Bill. The Act sought to compromise among, and satisfy, various American interests, including farm groups, industrialists, and old and prospective investors. As for Filipino business, the Act protected established agricultural producers in such fields as sugar, abaca and copra. Many Filipinos expressed dissatisfaction with one or another provision of the Act, but the leaders of the Philippine government supported the measure primarily on the basis of expediency. Brigadier General Carlos P. Romulo, then resident commissioner of the Philippines, commented at the hearings: "If we cannot have perfection, then let us at least have action."⁷ The time allowed the Philippines for discussion was short: the Act was approved by Congress only two months and four days before the date for the establishment of the new Republic. With rehabilitation payments and perhaps even the timetable for independence hanging in the balance, the Philippine government found no alternative to acceptance of the legislation. But opposition from many Filipino businessmen, intellectuals, and labor leaders to sections of the Trade Act has not diminished, and the measure remains to this day a controversial factor in American-Philippine relations.

The substance of the Philippine Trade Act deals with these topics: duties, quotas, quota allocation, taxes, parity rights, financial ties, and implementation procedures. Provision is made for reciprocal free trade between the United States and the Philippines until July 3, 1954; for a five per cent duty from then until December 31, 1954; and for an annual five per cent increment in duty from the latter date through 1972. From January 1, 1973 to July 3, 1974, full duties are to be paid.

The quantities of seven categories of Philippine exports (sugar, cordage, rice, cigars, tobacco, coconut oil, and buttons of pearl and shell) which can enter the United States under these preferential arrangements are limited by

quotas under the Act, the last four categories being subject to decreasing duty-free amounts rather than to increasing duties. In addition to setting specified quotas, the Act states that whenever the President of the United States finds that any additional Philippine article is coming or is "likely to come" into substantial competition with a similar American product, a quota can be placed on entry of the Philippine commodity. On the other hand no restrictions are placed on American goods entering the Philippine market. One effect of this might be to restrict diversification of Philippine products, since Philippine producers might hesitate to develop new export products whose status in the American market was uncertain.

The plan for allocation of each of the commodities under quotas involved a further restrictive procedure. Annual quotas were to be granted to producers and manufacturers operating in 1940, on the basis of their activities in that year. This would tend to restore to prominence the few firms that had dominated prewar Philippine production. For example, three cordage firms would receive almost the entire cordage allowance, three tobacco companies had accounted for about ninety per cent of the pre-war tobacco exports, three shell button factories in Manila had shared prewar production, and there were two major coconut-oil mills.

The provision of the Trade Act that aroused the most controversy, however, was the section stating that Americans were to have equal rights with Filipinos in business and in the use of natural resources. The Philippines, like most underdeveloped countries, was deeply concerned about matters of national sovereignty and control of natural resources. Its representatives felt strongly that basic development should remain in the hands of Filipino nationals and, as a result, they wrote into the Philippine constitution the following clause:

All agricultural, timber, and mineral lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, and other natural resources of the Philippines belong to the State, and their disposition, exploitation, development, or utilization shall be limited to citizens of the Philippines, or to corporations or associations at least 60 *per centum* of the capital of which is owned by such citizens, subject to any existing right, grant, lease, or concession at the time of the inauguration of the Government established under this Constitution.⁸

This provision, approved at the time by the United States, safeguarded existing American interests but limited future investment. In 1946, however, when the Trade Act was under consideration, certain American business groups took the position that future as well as past investments must be open to United States nationals on the same basis as to Filipino citizens. As a result, the Trade Act of 1946 included the following paragraph:

The disposition, exploitation, development, and utilization of all agricultural, timber, and mineral lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces and sources of potential energy, and other natural resources of the Philippines, and the operation of public utilities, shall, if open to any person, be open to citizens of the United States and to all forms of business enterprise owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by United States citizens.⁹

This clause, the so-called "parity" or "equal rights" provision, made it necessary to amend the Philippine constitution. The amending process called for a nationwide referendum, and "parity" became a major issue in domestic Philippine politics.

One more provision in the Trade Act should be noted: the fixed tie between the peso and the dollar. The Philippine peso was worth US \$0.50, and the Trade Act provided that this ratio be maintained. Free convertibility of pesos into dollars was not to be suspended, and no restriction was to be imposed on the transfer of funds from the Philippines to the United States. These two provisions could be set aside only with the approval of the President of the United States.

From the Philippine viewpoint, postwar American legislation on economic relations included some generous provisions and others that were restrictive. Substantial rehabilitation payments had been provided, but these would be available only if the Trade Act were accepted. The Trade Act allowed for a lengthy weaning period for Philippine products in the American market, but imposed restrictive provisions with regard to quotas, finance, and investments. These might hamper Philippine economic development and would certainly create internal dissension because of the need to amend the Philippine constitution. After lengthy debate, the Trade Act was accepted by the Filipinos for two main reasons: they wished to obtain the maximum amount of immediate benefits through rehabilitation grants, and they were willing to implement compromise legislation that would not delay the date of Philippine independence.

Philippine economic and political life after the liberation reflected both the upheavals of the war and occupation period, and concern for the difficult years ahead. Quezon's successor, Sergio Osmena, lacked the vigor and strength needed in a chief executive at that crucial time. Returning members of the government-in-exile noted many changes in the domestic Philippine scene. Four years of occupation had provided many opportunities for politicians like Manuel Roxas, who had stayed in the Islands, to gain followers and win power. The presence of an armed resistance group, the Hukbalahap, the insistent problem of what to do about collaboration, and the need to define future relations with the United States, all presented new and challenging issues. Old party loyalties that had developed around the demand for

independence could no longer provide enough substance for a political campaign.

Osmena was overshadowed in the public arena by the energetic and ambitious Roxas who, in spite of having served in high official posts in the Japanese-controlled puppet government, was vouched for by General Douglas MacArthur on the ground that he had supplied the General with valuable intelligence information. In January 1946 Roxas and his supporters seceded from the Nacionalista party and formed the new Liberal party, which nominated Roxas for president and Elpidio Quirino for vice-president. Osmena, who ran for re-election on the old Nacionalista ticket, was also supported by a new coalition called the Democratic Alliance, including representatives of the Hukbalahap, the National Peasant Union, the Committee of Labor Organizations, and other groups. In contrast to Osmena, who did not actively seek votes, Roxas conducted a whirlwind campaign attacking "chaos, corruption, and Communists" and making extensive pre-election promises. He was elected on April 23, 1946, polling 1,333,392 votes to 1,129,996 for Osmena. Thirteen Liberals and eleven Nacionalistas were elected to the Senate; sixty Liberals, thirty-one Nacionalistas, and seven members of the Democratic Alliance were elected to the House.

The new Roxas government was in power on July 4, 1946, when an independent Philippine Republic was established. But sovereignty did not solve all outstanding Philippine problems, just as the April election had not settled the question of Congressional representation. The first session of the Philippine Congress refused to seat ten minority representatives, including seven members of the Democratic Alliance in the House and three Nacionalista senators. The official basis for this action was a report of the Commission of Elections which said that voting in the disputed districts did not reflect the true popular will. On the other hand, the question of wartime collaboration was decided by the House, when it held that indictment for treason was not sufficient ground to deprive a member of his seat. The battle that raged over the unseated congressmen was not merely a matter of personalities or even party politics. On certain types of legislation, such as the proposal of constitutional amendments, the Philippine constitution requires approval by a vote of three fourths of all members of the National Assembly, or by a specially called constitutional convention. The Trade Act was approved by the required percentage of congressmen seated, but had the full number elected been sitting, the measure might have been defeated.

Both the Nacionalista party and the Democratic Alliance opposed parity, as did many Filipino businessmen, civic leaders, and others. However, there appeared to be few alternatives. Rehabilitation depended on acceptance of the Trade Act, and many Filipinos felt that all future agreements with the United States would be imperiled if parity was rejected. The plebiscite on changing the constitution to allow for parity took place on March 11, 1947, and the necessary amendment was approved by a vote of almost eight to one.

It must be noted, however, that only about forty per cent of the electorate went to the polls.

A few days after the plebiscite, the Philippine and United States governments concluded extensive military agreements, including a ninety-nine-year American lease on a number of bases. Under the terms of this agreement, signed on March 14, 1947, the United States was granted use of a series of army, navy, and air bases, with the right to use others if necessary. The following week it was agreed that a U.S. Military Advisory Group should be established in the islands to aid and advise the Philippine forces.

Notes

- 1 Joseph Ralston Hayden: *The Philippines, A Study in National Development* (New York, Macmillan, 1942), p. 3.
- 2 Mark Twain: "To a Person Sitting in Darkness," *Europe and Elsewhere*, from *The Portable Mark Twain* (New York, Viking Press, 1946), pp. 594-613.
- 3 *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State, 1898), p. 907.
- 4 Maximo M. Kalaw: "The Philippine Question—An Analysis," pp. 15-16, reprinted from *The Philippine Social Science Review*, Manila, Vol. III, No. 4, September 1931.
- 5 *U.S. Congressional Record*, Vol. 78, Part 4, p. 3580.
- 6 Constitution of the Philippines. See text in Hayden: *The Philippines*, p. 839.
- 7 Philippine Trade Act of 1946. Hearings before the Committee on Finance, United States Senate, 79th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 141.
- 8 Constitution of the Philippines, Article XII, Section 1. See Hayden: *The Philippines*, p. 838.
- 9 Philippine Trade Act of 1946, Public Law 371, 79th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 12.

THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

Russell H. Fifield

Source: Russell H. Fifield, *Americans in South East Asia: The Roots of Commitment*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell (1973), pp. 71-9.

Washington proceeded in a forthright manner towards the independence of the Philippines and towards the creation of special relations between two sovereign states.* America held to the target date—July 4, 1946—for independence. Suggestions that the date be advanced were as unsuccessful as efforts to delay it. President Truman came to believe that time was needed not only to work out the future relationship between Manila and Washington but also to enable the Philippines to recover from the immediate effects of the war. Although he had shown considerable interest in the islands in April and May 1945 the pressure of world events presumably diminished his attention.²³ After V-J Day he appointed Paul V. McNutt high commissioner to the Philippines, a selection that greatly influenced the course of events.

In October, Commonwealth President Osmeña saw Truman in Washington. The American chief executive approved a directive, prepared in McNutt's office in Manila, which inaugurated a program of reconstruction through the cooperation of eleven departments and federal agencies. Osmeña, however, could not return to Manila with any substantial aid, for legislation was being delayed in Congress. This failure may have cost him the presidency in the national elections of April 1946. Backed among others by the Communist-led Huks, Nacionalista Osmeña lost to Liberal Manuel Roxas who numbered influential collaborators among his supporters. (President Roxas ordered in January 1948 a political amnesty for collaborators.) Osmeña accepted gracefully his defeat by 54 per cent of the 2.5 million votes cast and thereby established a valuable precedent in the transfer of power in the postwar Philippines. In May President-elect Roxas accompanied by High Commissioner McNutt visited Washington where various proposed treaty and other agreements were discussed. It was agreed that after the independence

of the Philippines Washington, as requested by Roxas, would represent Manila's interests abroad until it was able to assume the task.

On the day President Truman issued his proclamation withdrawing U.S. sovereignty over the islands and recognizing the independence of the Republic of the Philippines, President Roxas, General MacArthur, and High Commissioner McNutt spoke at a ceremony on the Luneta before the Rizal Monument. In the distance were the ruins of the Legislative Building constructed under the Americans and of Intramuros built under the Spanish. As McNutt spoke, heavy rain began to fall. At 9:15 in the morning the American flag was lowered following by only a brief time in history the Japanese and Spanish banners. Manuel Quezon and José Laurel were not there to witness the ceremony but within a few days the former's body would be returned home in honor on the U.S.S. "Princeton" and the latter would be flown back from Japan under guard. With the raising of the Philippine flag one subsequent president of the republic sensed a feeling of nostalgia. On the occasion of the ceremony MacArthur said to a Philippine friend: "Carlos, America buried imperialism here today."²⁴

Independence settlement

This complex arrangement reflected changes of attitude in both Washington and Manila as a consequence of World War II. The U.S. Congress wanted to keep some of the colonial ties while the administration in Washington shifted to support genuine independence. The Department of State in particular was concerned over Asian and world reaction to the island republic. General MacArthur for his part clearly helped at the beginning to send Manuel Roxas to Malacañang, and Paul McNutt after a period of impartiality between the candidates contributed to Roxas' victory. The High Commissioner's more important handiwork is found in certain aspects of the Bell Trade Act and the Tydings Rehabilitation Act. Although a reservoir of goodwill existed towards the Philippines in Congress, Manila with its post-war conditions and desperate needs did not have much bargaining position with Washington. In fact, the Philippine economy was more dependent on the United States than any state in the Union was dependent upon the rest of the nation. Filipinos in the aftermath of liberation from the Japanese were willing to make concessions to the United States that would have been unlikely in the 1930s.

Political, economic, and military relations were formalized in the independence settlement.²⁵ A treaty of general relations associated with the transfer of sovereignty was signed in Manila. After frantic efforts involving Truman, Roxas, Acheson, and McNutt an executive agreement implementing the Bell Trade Act was also signed the same day. (Washington had opposed consummation of such an agreement until *after* July 4.) Contrary to the desire of the United States a military base accord was not concluded that

day, though an air transport agreement and a treaty of conciliation were signed on November 16. A consular convention was concluded on March 14, 1947, but a treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation was delayed. The American Congress passed a law enabling Filipinos to become naturalized U.S. citizens and giving them an immigration quota. Formal relations were conducted through the establishment of embassies in Washington and Manila.

The economic settlement expedited by McNutt in Congress during a visit to Washington placed severe restrictions on Philippine economic autonomy. The Bell Trade Act provided for free trade between the two countries for eight years after which tariff increases over twenty years would reach 100 per cent in 1974. The peso was tied by the act to the dollar and the rate of exchange could not be altered without the approval of the American chief executive. Under a parity provision, contributed by McNutt, U.S. citizens and corporations acquired the same economic rights in the development of natural resources and public utilities in the islands as Filipinos. The Tydings Rehabilitation Act provided \$620 million in compensation with \$400 million of it for people and firms proving they had been the victims of war damage, \$120 million for the restoration of public property and services, and \$100 million in the form of surplus U.S. military property. Under a linchpin proviso, also contributed by McNutt, private claims of more than \$500 would not be paid until Manila accepted the Bell Trade Act. As the parity provision contradicted the constitution of the Philippines, an amendment to the latter was necessary.

The Trade Act reflected a compromise between Manila, which wanted free trade for twenty years, and Senator Tydings, who was eager to terminate trade preferences in five years. Roosevelt shortly before his death favored declining preferences, and Truman participated in a key meeting, November 13, 1945, on the proposed bill. The State, Agriculture, and Commerce Departments in Washington criticized the act on various grounds.²⁶ The parity provision and the tying of the peso to the dollar, it was argued, violated the principles of reciprocity and independence. Nevertheless, President Truman signed the trade and rehabilitation bills into law on April 30, 1946, and the Philippine Congress and electorate approved the necessary amendment to the constitution.

Military arrangements between the United States and the Philippines were made in the agreement between on bases signed March 14, 1947, and that on military assistance concluded a week later. These arrangements were not predicated on a U.S. military role in the rest of South East Asia. The American Congress in a joint resolution approved June 29, 1944, had authorized the President to keep or to acquire and hold such bases and related rights as he deemed necessary for the mutual protection of the United States and the Philippines. On May 14, 1945, Truman and Osmeña had signed a preliminary statement on general principles relative to an American naval and

military base system in the islands, and the Manila Congress, in a joint resolution approved July 28, had authorized the Philippine President to negotiate the establishment of American bases in the archipelago.

It proved difficult, however, to translate intention into reality. The road to an agreement on military bases was long and winding with many hazards along it. A lively exchange, for instance, occurred between Ambassador McNutt and the Department of State when the former suggested on November 7, 1946, that in an Armistice Day speech at an American Legion banquet he note that the United States and the Philippines "have entered into a solemn compact for the mutual defense of the Philippines believing such defense to be in the interests of both nations."²⁷ He went on in his proposed remarks to assert that if Manila wanted the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the termination of American protection he was sure Washington would do so. McNutt who had discussed the speech privately with President Roxas believed it would strengthen the Philippine President against members of his administration who were contributing to the attack on the U.S. base program.

After consideration at the "highest levels of the State, War, and Navy Departments" McNutt was quickly informed that the "consensus is that your proposed declaration is inadvisable at this time and that public reference to 'a solemn compact for the mutual defense of the Philippines' would be impolitic in any foreseeable circumstances."²⁸ The Ambassador on November 10 replied that he found it "extremely difficult to reconcile" the contents of the telegram with the previous U.S. stance relating to a mutual defense compact. "If this is not the settled policy of the US," he asked, "what can I tell Philippine Government?"²⁹ Three days later the Department of State informed McNutt that Washington did not want to make a public reference to a "solemn compact" pending the conclusion of the base agreement. In fact, that very day, November 13, the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy considered the base problem in the Philippines, and the Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson expressed impatience over Manila's attitude, observing that the U.S. need for forces and bases in the islands was being reexamined.

On November 23 General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Army Chief of Staff, recommended that all American army forces be withdrawn from the Republic of the Philippines. Secretary Patterson six days later in his agreement wrote in a letter to the Secretary of State:

You will note that General Eisenhower has recognized that the military importance of the Philippines is of lesser weight in our national interest than the future good relations of the two nations and that long term continuance of Army forces in the Philippines would be of little value unless their retention was the result of an expressed desire of the Philippine Government.³⁰

Secretary Byrnes agreed with Patterson and Eisenhower. President Truman on December 4 approved the recommendation that all American army forces be withdrawn from the Philippines. President Roxas, however, clearly indicated later in the month he wanted U.S. bases in the islands. He was particularly concerned over American installations near the capital and over the question of jurisdiction over U.S. military personnel.

When the accord of March 1947 was finally reached twenty-three naval, army, or air force bases were involved. In the agreement, the United States acquired for a period of 99 years "the right to retain the use" of a designated list of them and to use designated others if Washington saw "military necessity." Both parties would have to agree before any third state could acquire bases in the Philippines. Washington was free to seek the enlargement or reduction of the areas. The air base at Clark Field and the naval base at Subic Bay were key installations.†

In 1946 the U.S. Congress had passed a military assistance bill for the Philippines indicative of coming American-Philippine military relationships. Under the military assistance agreement of 1947 (replaced in 1953) U.S. aid in the form of training, weapons, and related support was provided and a Joint United States Military Advisory Group was created to assist in the program. Philippine military equipment was thereby related to U.S. sources. The increasingly serious Huk menace was a factor in the deliberations on military aid.

Just as the parity provision and currency arrangements were viewed by many Filipinos as an infringement on their sovereignty, U.S. bases with related problems of administration and jurisdiction caused concern among some Filipinos. In the early postwar period frictions between Americans and Filipinos could be more easily held in check than in subsequent years. In fact, Manila was critical of Washington for not developing its bases faster. Nationalism, however, was on the increase, stressing more and more economic and cultural considerations though not at all ignoring political ones.

The basic foreign policy of the Republic of the Philippines in the early years was established by the independence settlement. Although no formal alliance existed between Washington and Manila until 1951, despite talks on security with mutual understanding, the presence of American bases on Philippine soil ruled out nonalignment as the heart of foreign policy. The bases could draw an attack on U.S. armed forces in the Philippines and they could provide facilities for American military operations outside the islands. It is impossible to isolate foreign bases from the country in which they are located. The host nation can attempt to determine the circumstances under which base facilities are used in warfare but their very existence is a calculation in the plans of friend and foe alike.

Important though the bases are in Philippine foreign policy, they were only symbols of the special relationship between the United States and the

Philippines after July 4, 1946—a special relationship resting on historic, political, and economic foundations as well as on security considerations. It meant more to the Filipinos than to the Americans, for the United States was a superpower with global interests. Nevertheless, in the world of 1946, Washington had a special relationship with only three countries, Great Britain, Canada, and the Philippines. The Filipinos for their part often claimed that the Americans took them for granted in East Asia, but the time would come when the reverse accusation would be made.

In the early years of the island republic two roles for Manila were frequently mentioned. Some Americans and Filipinos thought of the new state in terms of a "show window of American democracy in Asia" and of a "bridge between Asia and the West." The first concept was not valid in fact and the second was not feasible in practice, and both were condemned by many Philippine nationalists who did not want either. ‡

The special relationship between Washington and Manila complicated the search of the Filipinos for an Asian identity or more important a national identity. The search would be intensified as the events of July 4, 1946, became less vivid and more a page in a history book. In the early years of the republic, genuine sympathy for non-Communist nationalist movements, loyalty to the principles of the United Nations, cultivation of ties with a number of non-Communist Asian neighbors, and sponsorship or participation in regional gatherings like the Baguio Conference of May 1950 were characteristics of foreign policy. Malacañang upon the independence of the Philippines established diplomatic relations with no Communist state, and considered communism at home or abroad a threat to the security of the republic. The development of the Cold War confirmed the pro-American and anti-Communist stance in Manila.

The hopes for the bright future of the Philippines at the time of independence were drastically curtailed by 1950. Probably too much was expected by Americans who regardless of political party were eager for the Philippine experiment to succeed and by Filipinos who believed the mere acquisition of sovereignty would provide the key to prosperity and peace. The level of expectation for states emerging from colonialism was much higher in the late 1940s than in the 1950s or 1960s.

Three grave developments

The Philippines faced three serious situations within four years of independence—an economic crisis, a weakening of political democracy, and the real possibility that a Communist regime would take over the islands. All were interrelated and affected Philippine-American ties. The independence settlement was subjected to pressures for revision that produced changes much earlier than anticipated.

Although the United States officially estimated it had given the islands

between V-J Day and early 1950 \$2 billion worth of overall aid, much of it did not contribute to solid economic development. Controversies arose over unpaid war damage claims, back pay to wartime guerrilla units, "anomalies and irregularities" or graft and corruption, and numerous other subjects. On the positive side of the ledger were the more than doubling of the physical volume of production to prewar levels from 1946 to 1949, the reduction in the cost of living from a 1946 index of 100 to a 1949 index of 44, and the growing entrepreneurial class. But on the negative side were the system of levying and collecting taxes, the low wages of agricultural and industrial workers, the standards of public administration, the reduction of foreign exchange reserves by early 1950 to less than half those in 1945, the mis-handling of import and exchange licensing following its imposition in 1949, and the extremely limited resources of the treasury in 1950. Since the big cumulative import surplus from the conclusion of the war to the end of 1949 was matched by net American government expenditures and since the latter were declining with the spending of rehabilitation funds, the Philippines in early 1950 was badly in need of more U.S. aid.

Political democracy in the islands was at stake in the late 1940s. In effect the presidential democracy of Quezon had been replaced by a two-party system with hotly contested elections. After President Roxas' sudden death in April 1948 Vice-President Elpidio Quirino succeeded him. In a hotly contested election in November 1949 Quirino of the Liberal Party defeated José Laurel of the Nacionalista Party for the presidency. The election was characterized by extensive frauds and many instances of terrorism—birds and bees were allegedly called upon to vote and even ancestors reportedly rose from their graves to flock to the polls. The effect was to discredit the electoral process and give support to the Hukbalahaps. The Liberal administration before and after the elections suffered from anomalies and irregularities.

The Hukbalahaps constituted the greatest threat to law and order the postwar republic had faced.³² Although Communist-led they had considerable support, especially from the peasants in Central Luzon who suffered from longstanding economic and social grievances. Commonwealth officials had failed to keep their promises, and the leaders of the republic, though more sensitive to voting power in a two-party system, had achieved little in the cause of social justice. From a People's Anti-Japanese Army (Hukbalahap is an abbreviation from Tagalog) the Huks gathered political and military strength until they emerged as a People's Liberation Army in February 1950. Their objective was an anti-American people's republic. In many respects from 1946 to 1953 a civil war of guerrilla dimensions was fought between the government and the Huks in Luzon and on occasion in the Visayas. Probably only the American liberation of the Philippines had prevented the Huks from taking over the government (given, of course, Japan's collapse), and after the independence of the country, they made another bid for power. If the islands had been a mainland state adjacent to a people's

republic, the cause of communism would have been greatly strengthened. As it was, the outside Communists, especially the Chinese, could give little more than propaganda support and limited advice on tactics and strategy.

South East Asian leaders viewed developments in the Philippines from 1946 to 1950 with some interest and much cynicism. Many of them considered the Philippines too closely tied to the United States and few were favorably impressed by developments in the islands. As the first country in South and South East Asia to achieve independence after World War II, the Philippines attempted to exert some leadership in Asian affairs. The effort met with little success. The Baguio Conference, for instance, aroused limited interest and produced no significant results. The Indians, Russians, and British were critical of the Philippine experience in sovereignty. In New Delhi the Filipinos were viewed as only enjoying the facade of independence, in Moscow they were considered mere puppets of the United States (another way of expressing the Indian viewpoint), and in London they were looked upon as a bad example for other newly independent peoples. Since the Republic of the Philippines was among the first to emerge of the new states after the defeat of the axis, it suffered from lack of comparison with others.

Notes

- * Ushering the Philippines into the family of nations was a unique experience for Washington, quite unlike what faced the British in liquidating a world-wide empire. The documentation in footnote 22 reveals considerable tactical confusion at times, with frantic telephone calls to and from Manila as July 4, 1946, neared.²²
- † American interest in Philippine base facilities was related to a diplomatic effort under way in 1946 to acquire base rights not elsewhere in South East Asia, but in Pacific islands like Manus, an Australian dependency; Western Samoa, a New Zealand dependency; Viti Levu (Nadi) in the Fiji Islands, a British colony; and others. The old Japanese mandated islands of the Carolines, Marshalls, and Marianas were under American occupation prior to becoming a United Nations strategic trust territory under the United States.
- ‡ Salvador P. Lopez, former Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, notes that the "show window" role "creates an unflattering image of the Philippines as an American political supermarket in Asia" and that the "bridge" role "places a heavy strain on the capabilities and resources of the Filipino nation which may have little desire to take on this role, being content to be itself, at peace with its neighbors and in fruitful cooperation with them."²¹
- 22. For a revealing account of Philippine-American relations six months before July 4, 1946, and six months thereafter, see *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, Vol. VIII, *The Far East*, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1971, pp. 861-943.
- 23. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, Vol. 1, *Year of Decisions*, Doubleday, Garden City, 1955, pp. 65-66, 275-77.
- 24. Carlos P. Romulo, *Crusade in Asia: Philippine Victory*, Day, New York, 1955, p. 5.
- 25. A critical evaluation of the U.S. role is found in George E. Taylor, *The Philippines and the United States: Problems of Partnership*, Praeger for the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1964, pp. 124-33.

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26. For a critique see memorandum by Secretary of State Byrnes to President Truman, April 18, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, Vol. VIII, pp. 873-75.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 925.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, p. 926.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 934.
31. The American Assembly (Frank H. Golay, ed.), *The United States and the Philippines*, Prentice-Hall, for the American Assembly, Englewood Cliffs, 1966, p. 31.
32. Russell H. Fifield, "The Hukbalahap Today," *Far Eastern Survey*, January 24, 1951, pp. 13-18. This article was based on field research in the summer of 1950.

GOODBYE, MOTHER AMERICA: AN OVERVIEW OF PHILIPPINE- AMERICAN RELATIONS, 1899-1969

Theodore Friend

Source: *Asia* 15 (1969): 1-12.

Discussion of Philippine-American relations tends to become repetitive and claustrophobic, so permit me at the outset to widen the context and talk about various Malayo-Polynesian peoples. When I later narrow the context, I shall take the opportunity not to cover the usual range of political, economic and military problems that constitute the core of practical discussion of the American presence in the Philippines. Instead I shall try to talk of role and style, rather elusive and possibly emotional concepts, but concepts which nonetheless may assist a fresh look at the subject.

Some countries undertake modernization; others are overtaken by it. Russia under Peter the Great, Japan under the Meiji statesmen, Turkey under Mustafa Kemal—each in its way voluntarily revamped itself in the direction of whatever was considered “modern” at that time. Most nations recently under Western imperial rule, however, may be considered as not generating “modernity” by themselves but having it in some degree thrust upon them, and thereafter responding to it. Among those overtaken by modernization are the Malayo-Polynesian peoples, all the way from Madagascar (now the Malagasy Republic) to the Easter Islands. In this great grouping we can see a variety of reactions to being conquered, colonized and in various ways assimilated into the critical assemblage of expectations that we call modern. The most numerous of these peoples, the Japanese, had the most complex pre-colonial civilization and have in many ways shown the greatest difficulty in galvanizing themselves into “modernity.” A people of rather small numbers and far simpler civilization, the Hawaiians have been either absorbed ethnically and culturally into the composite Americanism now prevalent in those islands or, if keeping apart from it, doing so in a state of cultural

stultification. On this range, the Filipinos lie in between—having preserved far more of their heritage than the Hawaiians and yet having responded far more positively to modern stimuli than the Indonesians.

But let us also look at Western encounters with the Malayo-Polynesian world in another way and inquire into the passivity or violence associated with the arrival, tenure and departure of a colonial regime. At the most peaceful end of the spectrum is the 20th-century history of the Manus of New Guinea as chronicled by Margaret Mead: a Stone Age people exposed in turn to Germans, Australians, Japanese and Americans; a people who made a great leap forward as a result of the impact—massive, transient and accidental—of American forces in New Guinea in 1944-45. Never, perhaps, were Americans imitated so intensely, possibly because they were on their way somewhere else and had the generous nonchalance of those who do not stop to conquer. At the violent end of the spectrum, by contrast, are the Indonesian revolution against the Dutch in 1945-49 and the Malagasy rebellion against the French in 1947-48. The former, predictable and prolonged, had as cause the Dutch refusal to accommodate themselves to Indonesian nationalism which had matured during World War II. The latter, sudden and unexpected, O. Mannoni interprets as having been caused by the extreme anxiety of the Malagasies at signs of overhasty French withdrawal.¹

Against this background, what can we say in general about the Philippine-American colonial relationship? We can say (1) that it began in a bloody fight between the two peoples, the Philippine-American War of 1899-1901, and it concluded some 40 years later with the two nations fighting beside each other to drive out the Japanese; (2) that the fighting together at the end is of far more significance in weighing the colonial relationship than the fighting against each other at the beginning; (3) that between wars, the colonizer and the colonized expended a minimal amount of violence against each other and formed an unusual bond of psychological attachment, of which the 1945 spirit of liberation is the clearest example; (4) that in the colonial interim there was an extraordinary absorption of political ideas and cultural influence by the Filipinos at the same time that they preserved their own fundamental core of values.

Let me remind you that these are peculiar phenomena, considering the experiences of the Malagasies, the Indonesians and the Hawaiians. They take on a still more peculiar aspect if you will grant the validity of a conversation I had last year in Manila after the annual Yale-Harvard dinner while I was dancing with a Filipina writer and critic. I made a remark about the contagious crudity of American popular culture. Demurring at my tone, she replied, "But we *fell in love with your culture*." She said it with a slightly wry undertone that acknowledged this was in many ways a silly thing to do, but she said it so positively and distinctly that it has sat in my mind ever since as a summary statement of historical fact; as one of those grand

generalizations that permits much qualification and exception but still, when sheared of them, can stand alone: "We *fell in love with your culture.*"

Let me quickly suggest what in concrete terms her remark means to me: The Filipinos, after fighting valiantly against great odds, "fell in love with" a conqueror who treated them generously; with his government by representation; with his free private enterprise and his free public education; with his breezy personal style, his individualism. The Filipinos absorbed as promising for themselves the American's sense of social mobility and his pragmatic idea of time; not his *pace*, necessarily, but his pragmatic conviction that time was a medium in which to get things done rather than something suffered as an anteroom to eternity. To say that the Filipinos "fell in love with" American culture is not to say "modeled themselves on" so much as to say "were influenced by" it. They had already considerable national identity and purpose of their own but, having fallen short of achieving sovereign independence, they allowed themselves a remodeling, a new maturation on an evolutionary time scale rather than on the revolutionary one of 1896-1901.

Nonetheless, to talk about the existence of love is also to talk about the possibility of hate. Surely that is not too strong a word for emotions evoked by American color prejudice, social exclusiveness and colonial indifference, whenever those phenomena were evident. But, with exceptions only in cases like that of the Sakdals, whose enemies were as much the Philippine Constabulary and Filipino landlords as the Americans, the hate engendered was generally personal, situational, unorganized and undemonstrative. Somehow, the engineering of the colonial relationship kept hate and frustration far below a revolutionary level of intensity.

One key factor, perhaps, was that the Americans never needed the Philippines as the Dutch needed Indonesia. The Dutch developed both an economic dependence on Indonesia and an emotional attachment to it, so that they wound up using a phrase that had some general currency: "our home in the Tropics." Clearly, few Americans ever felt that way about the Philippines. Whereas the Indonesians reacted to the imperial overinvolvement of the Dutch, the Filipinos reacted to imperial underinvolvement and felt sharply the general American indifference to them. In the Philippine-American relationship, the colonized peoples rather than the colonizer developed the greater economic dependence. Just as important, they developed an emotional dependence to accompany it.

The Filipinos could not speak of "our home in the Temperate Zone" because American color feeling and later immigration quotas made it clear that, despite forcing an Open Door policy in China, the United States was not an open house itself. Even so, America was a point of spiritual orientation and emotional identification. Filipinos, expressing themselves in intimate terms regarding this relationship, used familial words and concepts to describe it. The prevalence of such figures of speech is not surprising in any

culture where an extended family system is as important as the Philippines (nor is their relative rarity surprising in the United States, considering its nucleated family system and atomized individualism). In the early years, and even still in the provinces, a Filipino might say to an American, as some have to me, "We are your child." Not only simple Filipinos but even the most sophisticated resort to family metaphor, as when Carlos Romulo in 1943 wrote *Mother America* to remind the United States of all she had accomplished and all that was jeopardized by continued Japanese occupation of the Philippines. Romulo's metaphor was on the sweet, complimentary and propagandistic side, but there also existed the sour and profane side of family metaphor, as privately expressed by Manuel Quezon. The year before at Corregidor, Quezon heard broadcasts from the United States indicating a Europe-first strategy. "*Que demonio*," he burst out, "how typically American to writhe in anguish at the fate of a distant cousin while a daughter is being raped in the back room."

Historical feeling in the Philippines still vacillates between the "blood brother" feeling of having died together with Americans on Bataan and again in the liberation, and a feeling that may eventually win out—a feeling like Quezon's—that the Philippines was a ravaged sister in a war of which she was not the cause but in which she suffered far more than the United States. More than anyone else, perhaps, Claro Recto undid the "Mother America" style that Romulo had so highly polished. In his lonely dignity, Recto pointed out the psychological truth which many felt but did not express, that America really treated the Philippines like a mistress: for use when needed but otherwise ignored. Recto's skepticism was perhaps the first snip in scissoring away the familial conception of Philippine-American relations. Now it is more and more common, with cruder practitioners. An analytic mode is taking over, or at least an angry mood, in which the Filipino allows himself to see that he was never part of the American family. William Howard Taft over 60 years ago may have referred to "our little brown brothers," a phrase that sounds odiously condescending now, but in point of fact it was generally unacceptable to Americans then for different reasons. A song of troopers overseas declared:

He may be a brother to Big Bill Taft
But he ain't no brother of mine.

How different this is from the Kiplingesque sentimentality adopted by Englishmen and typified in such lines as:

Though I've belted you and flayed you,
By the livin' Gawd that made you,
You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!

Nor is there any American equivalent of those Kiplingesque emotions about a love left behind:

Though I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer
 Chelsea to the Strand
 An' they talks a lot o'lovin,' but wot do they understand? . . .

I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land.

Few Americans felt about the Philippines as many Englishmen did about Mandalay or other parts of the empire. So, in view of the attachment of most Filipinos to some idea or dream of America, we have here a case of unrequited international love. On the Filipino side, this frustration took an amazingly long time to turn into disillusionment. The process is still going on and may indeed only just now be gathering speed. One vivid example is the newspaper column of J. V. Cruz. Four or five years ago, Cruz did a twist on Taft and fashioned the scornful term "little brown American." He applied it to any Filipino who appeared too psychologically dependent on, politically indebted to or stylistically affected by American values and interests. The subconscious transaction taking place here may have gone something like this: "We cannot be brothers to Americans because they have never permitted it, and a present concern for our own dignity will not allow it. Therefore, any Filipino who behaves like or is beholden to Americans deserves to be ridiculed." So an age may be described or contained within a turn of phrase, for the Filipinos whom Americans once would not accept as little brown brothers will now not accept Americans as big white brothers. The national family never was. Even the family idea is now dying.

Perhaps I have been so pliable and impressionistic to this point that you may properly want something more rigid and tangible. An historian asked to do his thing may respond by dividing his subject into periods, and so I will. If we take Philippine-American relations, 1899-1969, it seems to me they may be divided into four phases: the apostolic, the tutelary, the period of bonded partnership and the period of negotiated partnership.

Let me explain. The 70 years fall roughly in halves at 1935, the years the Philippine Commonwealth began, when Manuel Quezon rose to President and Frank Murphy subsided from Governor General to High Commissioner. To go through the whole sequence, I would call 1899-1913 the apostolic period and 1913-1935 the tutelary period, these together constituting the first half of the whole. Together constituting the second half are 1935-1957 as the period of bonded partnership and 1957 to the present as the period of negotiated partnership.

Let me try to justify those terms and perhaps suggest representative pairs of men in each. For a taste of the first, or apostolic era, one might read the journals of W. Cameron Forbes, where one finds the full flavor of

turn-of-the-century imperialism in all its nobility and haughtiness, in its dedication and its condescension. Although this period lasted only from 1899 to 1913, its influence carries on as late as 1950—when a book appeared, in part inspired by Forbes, entitled *American Apostles to the Philippines*.² The apostles include George Dewey, Frederick Funston and Taft in the conquest and inauguration of civil government; Leonard Wood “restoring decency and credit to the Philippine government after a period of misrule”; Dean Conant Worcester bringing “fair dealing to the savages of the interior” and Frank Watson Carpenter teaching “American ethical principles of government” in the provinces. The accounts of these men are singularly boring because the author gives them no individuality. They are all clean and courageous, without warp or quirk, fond of the strenuous life, unsurprised at men of lesser capacity and unstinting in giving their time to “uplift” civilization in the Philippines. Frank Merriwells in college, Teddy Roosevelts in the saddle, musketeers without vices, apostles without Judases—so pictured they strike us as antique, wooden figures, incomprehensible or laughable. This, of course, is the failure of a man writing what is supposed to be an inspirational book, when imperialism has ceased to be an inspiring subject. Once, however, it was inspiring, at least for Western men, and the early American proconsuls in the Philippines were only human in responding to its call, and more than ordinary in what they accomplished.

They accomplished it, I must add, with the willing cooperation of many influential Filipinos and the acquiescence of the masses, who were at first hostile, then passive, finally dependent and even affectionate. As a characteristic relationship of the age one might choose two figures on the Philippine Commission, the forerunner of the Philippine Senate—Cameron Forbes and Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera. Pardo, an aristocrat and *ilustrado*, believed that the Philippines might be saved from obscurantism and stagnancy by American uplift and enlightenment, and he even desired statehood to that end. Boston Brahmin and Manila Brahmin, Forbes and Pardo saw eye to eye, and together looked down upon a people needing imperial rescue.

In the second period, 1913-35, the apostolic blush faded, and the Filipinos, having tempered revolutionary energy into constitutional nationalism, moved steadily towards autonomy. They obtained full control of the Legislature in 1916 and elected their own Chief Executive in 1935, with Filipinos rising steadily in various branches of government all the while. The so-called colonial ceiling on employment was far higher in the Philippines than in any other colony of the West, a fact that helps explain why the irritability of nationalism there was far lower than in most places. “Damn the Americans,” Quezon once said, “why don’t they tyrannize us more?” Some now declare that the tutelary relationship was indeed tyrannous—culturally and educationally stifling—but their remarks would seem weightier had more voices been raised to say so in the period under question. In fact, most Filipinos felt as Sergio Osmeña behaved towards Governor General Henry L. Stimson in

the late 1920's: taking a posture of gratitude and educability, while making persistently clear the Filipino need for autonomy in all things.

In 1935 Filipinos and Americans entered upon two successive periods of partnership which I suggest divide roughly at 1957 between a "bonded" and a "negotiated" kind. By the former term, I mean to imply something of both the psychological and legal senses of the word. By a psychological bond is meant an objectively demonstrable mutual attachment. Legally, bonding implies the security attached to certain stipulated conditions. The demonstrable attachment was certainly visible during liberation in 1945. The security consisted in the bases agreements (desired by Quezon, Osmeña and Manuel Roxas), the bilateral Defense Treaty and the prolonged tariff preferences guaranteed in the Bell Trade Act and the Laurel-Langley Agreement.

We all know that a considerable change has occurred in the Philippine-American relationship recently. For convenience' sake, I would date its origins around 1957, with the death of President Ramón Magsaysay. Magsaysay's relationship with America in general and Colonel Edward Lansdale in particular emphasized the bond of understanding and the assumption of natural cooperation between the two countries that had survived ever since the Commonwealth, long into the Republic. But beyond a certain point, the assumption of mutuality of interest and of inherent partnership ruptured; it was succeeded by a basic assumption of separate or conflicting interests and of partnership achieved only by overcoming considerable obstacles. We are in this relationship now, with partnership subject to renewal by discussion and redefinition by negotiation; with the Philippines no longer putting filial trust in the United States and the United States no longer able to take the Philippines for granted. The substance of the relationship is splendidly discussed in the American Assembly book to which Filipinos and Americans contributed equally.³ For the mood of the present relationship, each of us would have his own illustration and would argue expertly against any other. But let me hazard my own illustration, very different from the Pardo-Forbes, Osmeña-Stimson or Magsaysay-Lansdale relationships of the three earlier periods.

I suggest we recall the Manila Conference of 1967. President Johnson, trying to consolidate his allies and sympathizers on the war in Viet Nam, made the gesture of an Asia-centered conference to soften the fact of an American-powered war. The Philippines had already obliged by sending the Philippine Civilian Action Group (Philcag) to Viet Nam, for a variety of reasons not excluding military self-interest but certainly including a desire for American financial aid. As a candidate for his nation's highest office, Ferdinand Marcos had criticized the incumbent for over-responsiveness to American policy in Viet Nam, but as President, Marcos himself did not find it possible and perhaps did not even seek significantly to alter the formula of Philippine involvement there. This change of roles—critic-out-of-office,

imitator-in-power—represents more than a personal dilemma for Marcos; it represents, I suspect, a psychic dilemma for the Philippine nation, which in relations with the United States finds itself independent-by-wish, but dependent-by-necessity.

The Manila Conference, especially perhaps its diplomatic ball, dramatized these dilemmas to both sides. A cartoon in the *New York Review* conveyed the American anti-imperial view by showing Johnson dancing with Mrs. Marcos, a grinning elephantine LBJ lifting the lovely Filipina off the floor like a puppet. But the Philippine anti-imperial appetite satisfied itself in quite another way—in the rumored remark of the First Lady about President Johnson after the event: "I twisted him around my little finger."

Whether or not she actually said it matters less than the relish with which the story is told in Manila. It implies that whatever arm-twisting Americans might be inclined to, Filipinos are capable of their own subtle and skillful manipulations. And so my choice of representative figures in the era of negotiated partnership would vary somewhat from the other periods. If we take Lyndon Johnson for the American part, for the Philippine side we may take both Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos. Although the realities of international power and wealth keep the Philippines in some dependence on the United States, it nonetheless seeks, and increasingly obtains, what might be called emotional sovereignty. Once the Filipinos answered to America as to an inspired apostle, then as to benign teacher, then elder comrade. But now she seeks a dialogue between equals, however difficult equality is to define.

Let me conclude by reflecting on rather recent comments by Filipinos about Philippine-American relations that may further illuminate exactly where we are. A very able Filipino senator remarks that fellow nationalists are more and more applying the analogy of *kasama* to our bilateral ties, *kasama* referring to a tenant relationship and implying a tyrannous paternalism on the part of the landlord. I personally do not see the objective correlation here, but it would take another evening to explain why not. Let me instead examine the idea for what it suggests emotionally. *Kasama* in the old days was often complicated with *compadrazgo* and other familial or pseudo-familial considerations, but today there are considerable efforts to put it on an objective basis, so that both parties, but tenants especially, may find remedies in law for abuses they suffer, rather than having to resort to personal pleading or begging. The use of *kasama* today to describe Philippine-American relations not only shifts the metaphor of exploitation from lover-mistress to landlord-tenant but also from a quasi-familial to a quasi-contractual figure of speech. The emotional tone is also quite different: A mistress rages against a lover out of his acute unfaithfulness but a tenant rages against a landlord out of material deprivation or his attentive and oppressive "presence." I suspect a growing tendency among many Filipinos to picture the United States as absentee landlord rather than absentee lover, a tendency which, whatever else it may mean and without regard for the

validity of the image, suggests the likelihood on the part of the Filipinos of less tolerance, less forgiveness and more direct attempts at remedial action.

One political scientist, O. D. Corpuz, gives further point to the new analogies and new analyses and charges that American social scientists have overstressed familial modes of thought in the Philippines. Corpuz himself is unsentimental and unfamiliar in this thought and suggests that Americans may expect more and more "spontaneous demonstrations" that are really planned movements against inequities perceived in the relations of the two nations.

Such a development may indeed occur. But where will it lead? The desire of the Philippines to alter radically its current basic relationship with the United States is not nearly so clear to me as its desire to blame the United States for social and economic patterns for which there may be ample explanation in Malay family patterns or Spanish tradition. The allegation that American sugar quotas have ensconced an oppressive Filipino elite neglects the fact that Filipinos have had full legislative power for more than 50 years, executive power for more than 30 years and the panoply of sovereign autonomy for more than 20 years. Yet their use of these agencies has done little to remedy general social ills. Americans in the future may nonetheless expect more criticism even where unfounded and less gratitude even where there is a basis for it because Filipinos are in the process of giving up their familial picture of the United States and replacing it with a contractual one. Much disappointment of familial expectations lingers on, and many grievances remain undisputed. These will be expressed.

Even while groping towards an "objective" relationship with the United States, Filipinos will feel a pull back towards a "personal" one. Having met and loved American apostles, teachers, brothers and lovers, many Filipinos are not fully ready to believe that they were basically transients and passersby. When he was a senator, Ferdinand Marcos illustrated how difficult it is to give up the yearning for an eventual familial embrace. Marcos then was quoted privately in the vein of Pardo de Tavera more than 60 years before—lightly, not seriously, but nonetheless saying that the solution for Philippine problems was American statehood.

Regressive yearnings, recollected grievances and very present ambitions will all continue to complicate Philippine-American relations from the Philippine side. There is likewise plenty to complicate the relationship from the American side. But I should like to conclude with a thought that approaches objectivity in the best way I know as an historian to approach it—by broadening the view. The Philippines did not suffer the Malagasy kind of revolt caused by signs of premature imperial withdrawal nor an Indonesian revolution caused by postmature imperial suppression. Neither did it suffer the kind of cultural smothering that Hawaii has undergone. With cultural integrity preserved and adaptability proven, with a political stability and an entrepreneurial energy unrivaled in South East Asia, the Philippines faces its

considerable problems with considerable assets. By proceeding with the psychology of decolonization, she will have developed another asset—getting rid of her hang-up about Mother America. Moving away from old familial confusion about the United States is not easy, but hard political calculus, cool contractual relationships and clear negotiated agreements may be more than a boon to the Philippines. They may also be a relief to an America which is no longer apostolic or tutelary, never was very motherly or lovely, and is suffering its own present confusions of character and purpose.

Notes

- 1 *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 2nd Edition, 1964; 1st Edition, 1956.
- 2 Arthur S. Pier. Boston: Beacon Press, 1950.
- 3 *The United States and the Philippines*, edited by Frank H. Golay. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

SIAM

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SIAM¹*B. R. Pearn*

Source: F. C. Jones, Hugh Borton and B. R. Pearn, *Survey of International Affairs 1939-46*, vol. 7, *The Far East 1942-46*, London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1955), pp. 50-58.

Siam was the one associate of Japan who had not been reduced to obedience by all-out conquest and who came the nearest to being a genuine ally. Ever since the *coup d'état* of 1932 and the resulting rise to power of a military oligarchy in Siam its members had looked to Japan as a possible supporter of their irredentist aims. They had also regarded her as a makeweight against China under the Kuomintang régime – a quarter from which they expected possible danger in view of the size of the Chinese minority in Siam. Yet they were far from desiring to be dragged into war with the Western Powers at the behest of Japan. They found themselves in that situation all the same, partly through the policy which Marshal Pibul Songgram (known also as Luang Pibul), the Prime Minister and virtual dictator, had pursued in 1940-1. The fall of France, the isolation of Indo-China, and the Japanese descent upon Tongking had seemed to him an ideal opportunity for Siam to regain the territory in Laos and Cambodia which she had been compelled by France to yield in the course of the years 1893-1904. But Indo-China, enfeebled though she was, still remained strong enough to resist Siam. At the same time the embroilment of the two countries with each other gave Japan the opportunity to dictate a settlement to both and to bind Siam, as well as Indo-China, to the chariot-wheels of Greater East Asia. The Siamese Government as a whole did not relish this position; it had been their time-honoured policy to stand neutral in conflicts between the Great Powers and to trust to the rivalries between them for preserving the independence of Siam. Moreover, the pro-Japanese faction in the Siamese Government was opposed by those with Western, chiefly British, leanings. But the Japanese occupation of southern Indo-China placed this group in a very difficult situation. Powerful Japanese forces now stood poised on the borders of Siam, and without aid she could not hope to resist them. Appeals for such

aid were made to London and Washington, in the form of requests for arms, including aircraft and ammunition. But there was none to spare.²

According to his own testimony the Japanese Ambassador in Bangkok, Teiji Tsubokami, was instructed by his Government, on 1 December 1941, to stand ready to ask the Siamese Government either to conclude an alliance with Japan or, at the least, to allow Japanese troops to pass through Siamese territory in pursuance of operations against Malaya and Burma. On 7 December he received a definitive order to do this from General Terauchi, the Japanese Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Area. Pibul Songgram, the Premier, was absent from Bangkok, and his colleagues showed reluctance to agree to Tsubokami's demands, in spite of his warning that Japanese troops would cross the frontier the next morning. This, indeed, they began to do, and at first they were resisted. But Pibul hastened back to the capital, ordered the cessation of resistance, and reached an agreement with the Japanese Ambassador providing for the peaceful passage of the Japanese troops. He had thus elected to throw in his lot with Japan, and negotiations for a Pact of Alliance between Japan and Siam were promptly started. This Pact, which was signed on 21 December, provided for mutual respect for sovereignty and independence, committed the parties to giving each other full assistance, political, military, and economic, in the event of a conflict between either party and a third Power, and stipulated that no separate armistice or peace should be concluded by either signatory. The Pact was accompanied by a secret protocol whereby Japan agreed that she would help Siam to regain territories lost to Great Britain, while Siam promised to give Japan all the aid specified in the second article of the Pact in the existing war between Japan and the Western Powers.³ This agreement replaced that of 8 December and gave wider privileges to Japanese troops in Siam than had been conferred by the simple right of passage through the country. On 25 January 1942 Siam took the initial step in her part of the bargain by declaring war upon Great Britain and the United States.

At the time when Pibul Songgram made his first agreement with Tsubokami, Japanese troops were already in Bangkok. By ordering a cease-fire and accepting the Japanese demands the Siamese Premier saved his country from the devastation and ruin which must have resulted from any attempt at prolonged resistance. Since the Pacific War ended before any Allied counter-invasion could be mounted, Siam escaped being fought over and emerged comparatively unscathed. In this she was as exceptionally fortunate in Eastern Asia as Denmark was in Europe. She was not, however, to be exempt from some of the unpleasant consequences of a Japanese occupation.

The Japanese stationed considerable forces in Siam, besides using the country as an avenue for transit and communication with Burma and Malaya. They took over the airfields, railways, and harbours, and exercised jurisdiction in areas which they garrisoned. A military Liaison Bureau was set up to promote co-operation between the Japanese and the Siamese forces.

The Siamese army was employed in frontier defence and in the preservation of internal order. Some Siamese forces, however, participated in the invasion of the Shan States of Burma.⁴ In October 1943 the Shan States of Kengtung and Mongpan were annexed by Siam, in agreement with Japan. These States were then occupied by the Siamese army, which occasionally came into armed conflict with Chinese troops on the frontier between Siam and southern Yunnan.

The Japanese troops in Siam itself behaved with relative circumspection, since their commanders did not want trouble in a country on the lines of communication with the battlefield in Malaya and Burma. The Siamese authorities retained control over their own subjects, although the *Kempeitai* dealt with Japanese, Chinese, and Indians accused of any offences in Japanese military areas, and a joint military court was established in Bangkok to deal with cases affecting such persons. The Japanese were thus able to put pressure upon the Chinese and the Indians to join pro-Japanese organizations. For some time, indeed, Bangkok was the headquarters of the Japanese-sponsored *Azad Hind*, or Free India, movement.

The Siamese people in general were not well disposed towards the Japanese, and their dislike of them was accentuated by the actions of the Japanese, both military and civilian, in the country. The Japanese army often paid for food and other supplies with military scrip, including Siamese currency which they printed and issued themselves; this caused a general distrust of the currency and a consequent inflation of prices.⁵ The Chinese merchant and trading communities replied by hoarding and speculation, especially in rice, and consequently food began to be scarce in Bangkok and in other towns.⁶ Japanese civilians flocked into Siam, and, aided by pro-Japanese or venal Siamese officials, secured joint control – which was apt to imply Japanese control – of many state enterprises, such as the Siamese Rice Company and paper manufacturing and textile concerns. The export of rice, Siam's staple product, was monopolized by a branch of the Mitsubishi Concern.⁷ All this caused alarm and discontent, while fears for Siam's independence were increased by an intensification of Japanese cultural propaganda, especially after the conclusion in Tokyo of the Cultural Pact between Japan and Siam on 28 October 1942.⁸ This provided that Siam should facilitate the activities of Japanese cultural agencies, and should repeat Japanese radio broadcasts. There were to be exchanges of research workers and students, and of books, pamphlets, and films. In this way Siam was flooded with Japanese propaganda about the Greater East Asia War and about Japan's mission to liberate Asia from white domination. There was also the usual drive to spread the use of the Japanese language as the second tongue of the educated classes in Siam, but, as elsewhere, this had little success.

These causes of estrangement were reinforced by the economic consequences of Siam's alliance with Japan. In April 1942 a Siamese Economic Mission, headed by Nai Vanich Panananda, the Minister of Finance, went to

Tokyo to endeavour to secure imports of manufactured consumer and capital goods from Japan, since Siam could no longer obtain these from Great Britain and the United States, and to arrange terms for the export to Japan of Siamese rice, rubber, and tin. Nai Vanich, when in Tokyo, declared that, before the outbreak of war, when Japan was finding it difficult to get supplies of 'strategic' commodities such as rubber and tin, Siam had come to her aid. Now, since Siam's economic life had previously depended upon imports from countries with whom the war had severed her trading connexions, he hoped that Japan would assist her by sending her Japanese exports, especially of steel and chemicals.⁹ But he was in a bad position to bargain, since Japan now had alternative sources of rice, rubber, and tin. Moreover, since Japan was at war, she would have had very few manufactured goods to export even with the best will in the world. Meanwhile, the Japanese were profuse in promises, and on 22 April an economic agreement was reached with the Siamese Mission. This provided for parity in exchange between the Siamese currency (the baht) and the Japanese yen. This represented a considerable devaluation of the baht, which, especially in the later years of the war, commanded a much higher rate of exchange on the black market. The Japanese, for their part, promised to make available increased exports to Siam, and to maintain prices at the existing levels.¹⁰ But, especially as their shipping losses mounted, the Japanese were unable to meet Siamese requirements; Japanese imports into Siam became scarce and costly. On the other hand the Japanese did at first buy considerable quantities of Siamese rice, rubber, and tin. Siam, however, could not profit by her favourable balance of trade, since her credit accounts in Japanese banks remained 'frozen' for the duration of the war. Furthermore, the time soon came when the Japanese were unable to provide transport for Siamese raw materials, even though they needed them; consequently, these commodities piled up in the Bangkok warehouses.¹¹ All this was an inevitable concomitant of the war, and was not deliberately engineered by the Japanese. All the same, it was in sharp contrast to the glowing picture of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, as depicted by Japanese spokesmen.

In addition to stationing a large garrison in Siam, which was reinforced as the war went on and as signs of popular discontent grew, the Japanese established a number of prisoner-of-war camps in the country, into which they herded Australian, British, and Dutch soldiers. The Siamese people often showed as much sympathy and kindness as was in their power to these unfortunates. Many thousands of them were to find their graves in the jungles of Upper Siam; for, in June 1942, Japanese Imperial Headquarters authorized the construction of the Siam-Burma Railway. This was to connect Thanbyu-zayat, in southern Burma, with Banpong, on the Bangkok-Singapore line. A survey of the route was made in July and, after the negotiation of an agreement with Siam for its construction, the Japanese army began work upon it in November. The line was begun from both the Siam and the Burma ends,

and it was originally intended that it should be finished by the end of 1943. In February of that year the Japanese High Command, worried by their increasing losses of shipping, which they hoped that the use of the new railway would relieve, ordered its completion by the end of August 1943.¹² But this was asking an impossibility, since the route traversed some of the most difficult mountain and jungle country in the world, plagued by continual heat and torrential rains. There was no excavating machinery or proper engineering equipment; the work of constructing the permanent way was carried on almost entirely by manual labour. For this the Japanese used their prisoners of war as well as great numbers of Tamil, Burmese, Javanese, Annamese, Malayan, and Chinese coolies.¹³ These were partly forced to work and partly tempted to volunteer by false promises of good pay and kind treatment.¹⁴ The reality was terribly different. The unfortunate European and Australian prisoners of war were driven mercilessly by their Japanese and Korean guards, were fed on a starvation diet, and were housed in camps which, especially in the monsoon season, were continually flooded. Starvation and disease took a cruel toll of their numbers, in spite of their efforts to maintain some standard of sanitation, to do what they could for their sick, and to keep up morale. The Asiatic labourers, who lacked these traditions of self-help, who were regarded by the Japanese as completely expendable, and who were left to die if they fell ill, did die like flies. 'The Railway of Death', 415 kilometres in length, was completed on 17 October 1943.¹⁵ When it was completed the Japanese held a religious ceremony in commemoration of those who had died in the building of the line. This naturally seemed like an insulting mockery to the emaciated survivors, whose feelings can well be imagined, especially when they were told that they had worked satisfactorily and had always been fairly and justly treated by the Japanese army.¹⁶

The Japanese themselves estimated that the railway had caused the death of 10,000 of their own troops, of an equal number of prisoners of war, and of 30,000 coolie labourers.¹⁷ This is an incredibly high figure for the Japanese and certainly an under-estimate for the two latter categories. It is probable that over 12,000 prisoners of war of all nationalities and over 250,000 coolie labourers met their deaths in the building of this ill-omened line.

The Siamese populace, who saw these evidences before their eyes of what the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' really meant, had no love for the Japanese. Outwardly, however, official relations between Japan and Siam continued to be cordial during the years 1942-4. In April 1942 a special mission, at the head of which was General Phya Bahol, who had taken a prominent part in the military uprising of 1932, was dispatched from Bangkok to Tokyo. Here it was received in audience by the Emperor and in public professed the utmost friendship for Japan and readiness to co-operate in the struggle to establish a new Asia.¹⁸ The Japanese returned the compliment by sending a 'Grand Mission of Goodwill' to Bangkok. This was headed by Koki Hirota, a former Premier and Foreign Minister. It arrived in the Siamese capital in mid-July

and remained there for a week, during which more flowery declarations were exchanged. Pibul Songgram entrusted Hirota with a letter of thanks to Tojo for sending the mission, and expressed the hope that the Japanese Prime Minister himself would be able to pay a visit to Siam.¹⁹ Other signs of outward cordiality included the appointment, on 29 June 1942, of a Siamese Minister to Manchukuo; the recognition, on 7 July, of the Wang Ching-wei régime by Siam; and the conclusion, on 11 July, in Saigon, of the Siam-Indo-China boundary demarcation agreement. This boundary had been surveyed and marked out by a tripartite Japanese, Siamese, and French Commission.²⁰

While thus ensuring to Siam possession of the regions in Laos and Cambodia which she had been awarded by the enforced Japanese mediation in 1941, Tokyo seemed in no hurry to confer any further territory upon her, despite the secret promise made at the time of the Pact of Alliance. It would appear that by the spring of 1943 there were signs of discontent about this on the part of Pibul Songgram and his Cabinet. In the April of that year Kazuo Aoki, the Greater East Asia Minister, paid a visit to Bangkok and had discussions with Pibul, and with the Siamese Foreign Minister, Nai Vichitr.²¹ All that was publicly stated about these conversations was that a complete accord had been reached for the prosecution of the war. But, shortly after Aoki's return to Tokyo, Tojo, according to his evidence given before the International Military Tribunal in 1946, raised the question of presenting to Siam the four northern Malay States – Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu – which Great Britain had obtained from Siam in 1909. He also proposed to recognize Siamese sovereignty over the Shan States of Kengtung and Mongpan. Tojo said that he had encountered opposition from the Japanese army in Bangkok but that he overcame this. It is probable that the Japanese army in Malaya resented it also, because of the bad effect in that country of putting Malays who were Muslims under the control of the Siamese who were Buddhists.

The decision to give the four Malay and the two Shan States to Siam was formally taken at an Imperial Conference on 31 May 1943.²² On 15 June Tojo told the Japanese Diet that Siam was

marching valiantly and vigorously forward, surmounting numerous difficulties. In promoting closer association with Thailand we are firmly resolved to extend her our utmost co-operation, in the military, economic and political fields. Furthermore, I wish to declare that Nippon is sympathetic to the aspirations of the Thai nation and is prepared to afford her new co-operation.²³

On 13 July Tojo visited Bangkok, where he met Pibul. Two days later it was publicly announced that the four Malay and the two Shan States were to be transferred to Siam.²⁴ On 20 August a formal treaty of transfer was signed in Bangkok. By this Japan recognized the incorporation of the territories in

Siam and undertook to wind up the Japanese administration of them within sixty days of the signature of the treaty. By Article Four the existing boundaries of the states affected were to be preserved.²⁵

This treaty encountered some sharp criticism from members of the Investigation Committee of the Japanese Privy Council when it came before them. The dissentients declared that, since Japan had acquired no legal title to the territories in question, she therefore had no right to cede them to Siam. Such a step would provoke an unfavourable reaction abroad, because it would give the impression that she regarded herself as in permanent possession of the countries which she had conquered. This would be contrary to denials by the Japanese Government that they intended to annex the occupied regions and professions that they aimed at liberating them.²⁶ But Tojo insisted upon the transfer and secured the approval and ratification of the treaty. In January 1944 he told the Diet that, while the cession of territory to Siam was not in accord with the economic interests of Japan, it was in line with the principles which underlay the relationship of the countries of Greater East Asia.²⁷

Pibul Songgram, for his part, thanked Tojo warmly for his munificence. No doubt he was sincere in this, for he now had something to show for his compliance in December 1942. This, for a while, seemed to strengthen his position and to offset the financial and economic difficulties which had followed in the train of the Japanese alliance. But, as time went on and it became apparent that Pibul had backed the wrong horse, his position became precarious. His territorial gains were illusory, for, with the defeat of Japan, the victorious Allies would demand their rendition. Moreover, although the United States regarded Siam with an indulgent eye, and, indeed, ignored her declaration of war, Great Britain was less inclined to find excuses for her.²⁸ She would also have to reckon with a resuscitated France, who, in view of Siam's actions with respect to Indo-China in 1940-1, would be likely to favour harsh punishment for her.

In this situation the best policy for Siam was to follow the example of Italy and transfer her allegiance to the winning side, if she could manage to do so. So the pro-Western group among the Siamese politicians, in which the chief figure was Nai Pridi (known sometimes as Luang Pradit), who had resigned in 1941 to avoid association with the pro-Japanese policy, now began to gain in strength. They had maintained secret contacts with the Allies and with the 'Free Thai' movement abroad, which centred round the Siamese Minister in Washington.²⁹

The fall of the Tojo Cabinet, on 21 July 1944, was soon followed by that of Pibul in Siam. On 24 July his resignation was secured through the rejection of some relatively minor domestic changes which he had proposed and which the normally subservient Assembly refused to sanction.³⁰ His Government was replaced by one headed by Nai Khuang Aphaiwongse, while Nai Pridi came back as sole regent for the young king, who was in

Switzerland. What this change really meant was the formation of an anti-Japanese and pro-Ally Government in Siam. The ease with which this was accomplished, and the fact that no personal harm came to Pibul – who, indeed, was to return to power after the war – suggests that he himself was not averse to retiring and thus facilitating a change of policy.

In face of the powerful Japanese army stationed in the country, however, the new régime professed to maintain their predecessors' policy of adhesion to the ideals of Greater East Asia and co-operation with Japan. The Japanese were not deceived by this, but wished, if possible, to avoid a *coup d'état* and a direct Japanese military administration of Siam, since this would have been in too flagrant contradiction with their assertion that they were fighting for the independence of the nations of Eastern Asia. Therefore a curious situation prevailed in Siam during 1944–5. On the one hand, the Siamese Government were professing their readiness to live and die with Nippon, while in fact they were conniving at the landings by parachute of British and American agents in Siam, and were preparing for an uprising against the Japanese. Allied intelligence officers were even able to establish themselves in Bangkok and send out wireless messages with information of Japanese military movements. The Siamese Government were also secretly making overtures to the Allied Governments in which they were expressing their readiness to hand back the territories that they had secured by the treaty with Japan of 20 August 1943. They were hoping to retain those severed from Indo-China in 1941; but they indicated their willingness to submit this question to the United Nations. Here they were evidently banking on a divergence in policy between Washington, London, and Paris. They expected to start a general insurrection against the Japanese in August 1945, to coincide with an Allied invasion. That would have given Siam Allied status, and would have strengthened her claim to be confirmed in her gains from Indo-China. But the Japanese surrender forestalled this, and in the end Siam had to disgorge all her territorial gains since 1940.

Notes

- 1 During parts of the period covered by this volume the country was known as Thailand instead of by the traditional name of Siam. The Siamese themselves used the name Thailand from June 1939 to April 1946, reverting then to Siam for three years; in May 1949 the name was once more officially changed to Thailand. British usage conformed to this timetable except for the period of the country's alliance with Japan (January 1942 to August 1945), when the name Siam was commonly used. Because of these variations and for the convenience of readers the name Siam is used throughout this volume.
- 2 U.S.A., Congress, Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack: *Report . . .* (Washington, U.S.G.P.O., 1946), p. 404.
- 3 Interrogation of Teiji Tsubokami, in Tokyo, 18 April 1946 (I.M.T. Tokyo: *Preliminary Interrogations*).
- 4 *Shonan Times*, 29 May 1942.

- 5 U.S.A., Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch: *Japanese Domination of Thailand* (Washington, U.S.G.P.O., 1944), p. 31; Ronald E. W. Hastain: *White Coolie* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1947), p. 132.
- 6 Ibid. p. 178.
- 7 *Japanese Domination of Thailand*, pp. 30-33.
- 8 *Syonan Times*, 30 October 1942.
- 9 *Shonan Times*, 21 April 1942.
- 10 *Shonan Times*, 23 April 1942.
- 11 *Japanese Domination of Thailand*, p. 31.
- 12 I.M.T. Tokyo: *Record*, pp. 5524-5.
- 13 Hastain: *White Coolie*, pp. 134-58.
- 14 John Coast: *Railroad of Death* (London, Hyperion Press, 1947), p. 127.
- 15 I.M.T. Tokyo: *Record*, p. 5550; Coast, op. cit., pp. 144-5.
- 16 Ibid. pp. 145-56.
- 17 I.M.T. Tokyo: *Record*, p. 179; see also below, p. 226.
- 18 *Shonan Times*, 28 April 1942.
- 19 *Syonan Times*, 23 June, 15, 24, and 30 July 1942.
- 20 Ibid. 1, 10, and 14 July 1942.
- 21 *Syonan Sinbun*, 26 April 1943.
- 22 I.M.T. Tokyo: *Record*, pp. 36458-9.
- 23 *Syonan Sinbun*, 14 June 1943.
- 24 Ibid. 7 July 1943.
- 25 Ibid. 21 August 1943.
- 26 I.M.T. Tokyo: *Exhibits*, no. 1275; *Record*, pp. 36460-1.
- 27 *Syonan Sinbun*, 26 January 1944.
- 28 Hull: *Memoirs*, ii. 1587-8.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 *Syonan Sinbun*, 31 July 1944.